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# THE READING TEACHER

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**Parents and the Reading Program**

**Teaching Reading on Television**

Published by

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# *The* Reading Teacher

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DR. NANCY LARRICK is guest editor of this issue on "Parents and the Reading Program." Dr. Larrick has done extensive work in this area of the school's public relations and is, therefore, well-qualified to plan a series of articles about it. As you know, Dr. Larrick is now president of our Association. For a number of years she has been education director of children's books for a national book publishing company. She has written extensively for various periodicals, both educational and otherwise. Dr. Larrick has always been very much interested in improving the teaching of reading in our schools. And in this, she says, the parents have a very important and vital part. She has secured the services of four outstanding people to write on this subject. They have written informative articles for us. I am sure you will want to read all of them.

The special article in this issue is on "Teaching and Producing Reading Lessons on Television." This was planned as the *actual* teaching of reading, not just an enrichment experience. There are two parts of this article, one written by the television teacher and the other by the producer of the program. This was the world's first attempt at *teaching* reading through the medium of television. I am sure you will enjoy both parts of the article.

The December issue will be of vital interest to all classroom teachers of reading. The theme for the issue will be "Classroom Organization for the Improvement of Reading." Dr. Gertrude Whipple, Language Arts Supervisor of the Detroit Public Schools, has consented to act as guest editor. She has planned a series of worthwhile and practical articles for teachers of every grade. Knowing Dr. Whipple as we do, we can expect articles which will be quite helpful to all of us who need assistance in making plans for organization of our classes.

What do you think of the new cover? Do you like it better than the old one? Let us know. Your editor is always glad to get your reactions and suggestions for the improvement of the magazine. We can only meet your needs if we know them.

Editor



## **Teaching and Producing Reading Lessons on Television**

**A** "WORLD FIRST" took place in the Metropolitan Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area during this past school year. For the first time, children in the fifth grade received daily instruction on television in two basic subjects, reading and arithmetic, and in one enrichment subject, French, for the entire school year.

The Television Teaching Demonstration, financed by the Fund for the Advancement of Education, was the mutual endeavor of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, the Allegheny County Board of Education, nine independent school districts in Allegheny and surrounding counties, and the Metropolitan Pittsburgh Educational Television Station WQED.

The purpose of the demonstration was to determine the effectiveness of daily television teaching on the elementary grade level. The Pittsburgh Board of Public Education was responsible for the teaching content of each program. Station WQED was responsible for the most effective television presentation of the teaching possible.

The television teachers were selected from the faculties of Pittsburgh Public Schools, except for the French teacher, who was a faculty member of a Pittsburgh college. A full-time production staff was employed to assist the teachers. Students in some twenty classrooms in ten school districts viewed the television lessons over identical television receivers and under comparable circumstances, with the approval of their parents. Classroom teachers had a five-minute readiness period before each lesson and a ten to fifteen minute follow-up period after each lesson. An evaluation of the year's work was made by the Division of Curriculum Development and Research of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education.

The Television Teaching Demonstration will be expanded in the school year of 1956-57. Additional subjects have been added: history and geography for fifth graders and physics for high school students.

Miss Stella Nardoza will repeat her instruction in reading, and Miss Rhea Sikes will continue as producer of the Television Teaching Demonstration.

The reports which follow attempt to reveal in part what the reading teacher and the producer learned during a year of using television as a medium to aid instruction in the fifth-grade reading program.

## Teaching Reading on Television

by STELLA NARDOZZA

● TELEVISION TEACHER OF TOTAL  
TEACHING DEMONSTRATION  
WQED, METROPOLITAN PITTSBURGH  
EDUCATIONAL STATION

**A**FTER ENTHUSIASTICALLY agreeing to teach reading daily over television for the period of a school year, the sobering thought occurred to me that this would probably be the most difficult task I had ever undertaken and the most challenging. I was right. Teaching reading to fifth-grade youngsters in a normal classroom situation is a challenging experience today. How much more of a challenge is it, then, to teach these same ten-year olds *via* television when they are so far removed from direct contact with the reading teacher?

How does one teach reading with no possibility of immediate communication with the children to be taught? This was the challenge which had to be met. It was exciting and at the same time terrifying. Since this was a first, there were no guideposts. In the light of study, it appeared as though this challenge could be met by a series of adaptations — adaptations of certain materials in the text, of teaching methods and procedures, and personal adaptations. Of paramount importance was adapting to a situation wherein the children to be taught were far removed physically from the television teacher.

### **A Pattern Was Developed for Lessons**

After studying and analyzing the reading text adopted for use in the

demonstration, a pattern of lessons was developed which could be taught over television. The pattern consisted of:

- A motivating lesson for each story to be read.
- Lessons primarily concerned with developing fundamental language understandings and word-attack skills, and developing basic interpretative skills and abilities.
- Lessons to extend the interests of the child.

Aside from these three basic types, there was developed for each unit of stories to be covered, a motivating lesson and a lesson of summation.

A detailed study was made of the skills lessons, to separate those which seemed adaptable to television from those whose presentation television-wise seemed impossible. The latter category included many of the interpretative skills. Surely these would be impossible to teach over TV when compared to the more easily adaptable word-attack skills. For in developing basic interpretative skills and abilities, we lean heavily on the child's expressions of his experiences and reactions in helping him to form and react to sensory imagery, recognize emotional reactions of story characters,

perceive relationships, identify elements of style, recognize plot structure, summarize and organize ideas, and appreciate descriptive, figurative, or picturesque language. On the assumption that major emphasis in teaching such skills and abilities must be handled by the classroom teacher, their presentation on television would be handled to a limited extent. How wrong was this assumption! Some of the most enthusiastic responses received throughout the year came from fellow teachers and TV students following the initial presentation of these very lessons over television. Thus in the regrouping of skills, very few remained to be developed primarily by the classroom teacher.

#### **Elements of Motivating Lessons**

To modify materials in the basic text meant a corresponding modification in teaching methods and procedures. Usually in one classroom period a teacher can follow through on the three basic steps involved in reading a story, namely: preparing for reading, guiding the reading, and interpreting the story read. A natural limitation of television eliminates the teaching of the last two phases of this lesson by the television teacher. However, on television the story was motivated by building background and helping with vocabulary needs. But this was not sufficient material upon which to build a twenty-five minute lesson. Furthermore, no story could survive twenty-five minutes of motivation. To solve this problem, an activity called "word study" was incorporated into the lesson. This activity

required pupil participation and was primarily concerned with some phase of language understandings or word-attack skills. As it developed, a motivating-type lesson contained the following elements: (1) an introduction, (2) word study, (3) building background, anticipating vocabulary needs, and (4) conclusion or specific purpose for reading. Silent reading and discussion of the story became follow-up activities conducted by the classroom teacher.

#### **Children Encouraged to Participate**

Lively interesting discussion plays a major part in all areas of the reading program. But on television one cannot invite discussion, or talk over, or ask for oral contributions from the students. The teacher is on her own for twenty-five minutes; she does all the talking. But she is teaching live youngsters, each of whom must be made to feel that he or she is a vital part of the particular reading situation. To foster this feeling, children were encouraged to participate as fully as possible during the TV lesson. They worked with words, using clues to help with syllabication, accent, and vowel sounds. They recited poetry, sang songs, and hummed tunes. There were many listening experiences which we hope activated little minds to engage in some future research or reading experience. Questions were directed to students for immediate verbal response. When the question was asked, "What is your favorite sport?" we knew typical replies would be "baseball" and "football," with a few other responses thrown in. The technique of

direct questioning of students had to be handled carefully. Any question requiring a response of more than one or two words would create chaos in the viewing classroom. Thought-provoking questions are worthwhile if children understand no verbal response is necessary. In fact, such statements and questions were of great value as a stimulus toward wide reading and research.

#### **Devices Play an Important Part**

Adapting the classroom reading program for use on television served to convince us more and more that teaching on television is quite different from classroom teaching. Devices are a case in point. Certain devices were developed as aids to teaching. One, a three-dimensional model of a boy, called Dick Dictionary, was used to teach dictionary skills and understandings. Another, a jester-puppet, was used in connection with the unit covering tales of nonsense and humor. This creature was a nonsensical fellow and seldom applied himself to such tasks as learning to discriminate between homonyms. But we taught him. My, the skills he learned! One TV student remarked, "We just love Ysatnaf Regresseem (the puppet's name), but we know when he appears, there's work to be done."

As the year progressed, other devices were used for various units in the book. Devices are not necessary aids to classroom teaching. The biggest aid in the classroom is the child. We draw on his experiences, creative imagination, and enthusiasm to supply us with ideas for motivation, interest,

and pupil activity. But this is not so on television. There is no Tommy present in the studio, so we use devices as a substitute. And yet, the substitutes may not be so bad. For when Tommy looks at television, whether at home or in school, he expects something a little different. There's magic in television, and a bit of it must come through to him. These devices served the purposes of the lessons for which they were intended, and at the same time, held the interest of the children and gave them something to anticipate. Boys and girls became familiar with them and so felt comfortable with them. This may account for the fact that reports from classroom teachers indicated their television students often were reluctant to leave one unit and begin another.

Groping for unit themes was a continuous process since this idea was recognized as being a basic part of the over-all planning and specific lesson planning. Here was another value in the use of devices.

Fifth-graders are of a delightful age group. Not too blase or sophisticated, they accepted the devices with tongue in cheek and had great fun.

Little could be done to adapt lessons on television to provide for individual differences. Of necessity, lessons were geared to the average but planned to reach the widest possible range in pupil interest and to stimulate growth in personal reading. In building background for certain word-attack skills and in review lessons, it was possible to cover a spand of reading levels. Likewise, in lessons to ex-



tend interests, leads to wide personal reading were presented that would appeal to children reading on all levels. As part of the program to encourage wide reading in many areas, graded lists of titles, covering every unit for the year, were sent to each cooperating teacher.

#### **Personal Adaptations Are Necessary**

What are the personal adaptations to this new medium? It was necessary to adjust to a restricted teaching area. Only such movements absolutely necessary to the purposes of the lesson were permitted. Not even a sneeze was allowed. A classroom teacher can move freely from one area of the room to another, all the while looking into the eyes of each child for that intimate, personal contact which tells her so much about the child and the effectiveness of the lesson upon him. Whereas the teacher on TV, when speaking directly to the children, looks at one spot, a particular lens of a particular camera. But in that one lens she sees a child, a very real child whom she is teaching.

Since the best possible use must be made of the twenty-five minutes at her command, rambling and groping for words could not be permitted. Ideas were well thought out and planned in advance. Cues, given to assist the director in giving camera shots, must be remembered as written. It was gratifying to know that the director would always come through with a remarkable feat of mind-reading, when such cues were forgotten. Other adjustments necessary for effective television teaching were learning to take signals

and follow them accurately, adhering to split-second timing, and even paying close attention to dress and hair styling.

Meeting an emergency on television can be a harrowing experience. Sometimes a bit more harrowing than meeting a similar situation in the classroom. Last winter, an air force officer was scheduled to appear as a guest on a lesson about wonders of today. The entire lesson was planned in detail around the guest and the material which he was prepared to discuss and demonstrate. Fifteen minutes before air time, word was received that our guest could not possibly make his scheduled appearance due to bad road conditions. The air force couldn't get through, but we had to get through on television. In such a situation all concerned are flying blind because there is no printed material to chart the course. We were rescued by our very efficient and resourceful producer and her staff who mobilized all efforts to follow every hint and suggestion made by the teacher in her frantic efforts to develop a substitute lesson.

#### **Close Contact with Pupils Is Necessary**

These many adjustments were gradually facilitated as experience was gained in planning and organizing lessons and in daily appearances on television. By these adjustments we hoped to establish close contact with our television students. Evidences of pupil interest and participation were perhaps an indication of such an achievement. Throughout the school year we received from these students original stories and poems, written and tape-



recorded book reports, research papers, booklets, models, drawings and paintings, original songs, projects of various kinds, and classroom newspapers. Children's contributions were acknowledged over TV by being read or shown and by mentioning their names and schools.

This pupil interest and enthusiasm was due in no small part to the enthusiastic support and hard work of the corps of cooperating teachers who manned the classrooms. Without their cooperation and wonderful efforts, none of this would have been possible. If the seed of interest was planted in young minds by something presented on television, the nourishment and fruition of that seed was the accomplishment of these teachers. Thus, children in the demonstration gained a wealth of reading experiences through the combination of television and classroom teaching.

#### **TV Provides the "Extras"**

Through television, we tried to give the youngsters extras they could never get in the classroom. The great American poet, Robert Frost, gave them a memorable experience in listening to his poetry and his words. How thrilled the girls and boys were to meet the author of a story they had just read. Thereafter, they clamored for more stories by Fred D. Berkebile. From Chicago came Jack White, the artist who so beautifully illustrated many of the stories in their book. Subsequently, many of the TV students illustrated everything they submitted. An explorer and his young son told of their experiences one summer on

the McKenzie Delta region of Canada. The hit of the season was a lively interview between Frankie Thomas, star player of the Pittsburgh Pirates, and a little leaguer, John Rickert. The managing editor of the *Pittsburgh Press* gave an excellent picture of the newspaper business today, when he appeared as a guest. An outstanding artist of the Pittsburgh area helped the youngsters to interpret paintings done by well-known artists. After reading about Lee at West Point, the children viewed a film about the military academy and heard an ex-cadet tell of his training there. All these youngsters had a personally conducted tour of Station WQED through the eyes of a TV camera.

To have had contact with such outstanding people was a rewarding experience for the television teacher. Always to remember that we were privileged to introduce the great man, Robert Frost, is a thought worth cherishing.

#### **Conclusion**

In retrospect, this year of teaching reading on television was one of real interest, great excitement, and challenge. It was a year of practicing extreme self-discipline, permitting nothing to interfere with the thinking, planning, and constant work required to the end of creating the best possible lessons for the TV students who were my daily inspiration.

My greatest personal satisfaction was to experience gradually a feeling of oneness with the unseen boys and girls. Perhaps this was the challenge which was conquered.

## **Producing Reading Lessons on Television**

by RHEA SIKES

● PRODUCER OF TOTAL TEACHING  
DEMONSTRATION  
WQED, METROPOLITAN PITTSBURGH  
EDUCATIONAL STATION

FEW PEOPLE would deny that television is the greatest selling device yet developed. To lure the greatest possible number of people to exposure to a product, television has attempted to give the people what pleases them most. As a result, television has been used primarily as a medium of entertainment. We Americans have been conditioned to expect that a twist of the knob on our sets will bring us relaxation, and escape from our everyday cares. We assume, for the most part, the role of passive spectators, letting the sound and picture engulf us with no effort on our part beyond being sure that our sets are in focus and that the rest of the family does nothing to distract our absorption in what is being presented for our pleasure.

Educators and television personnel have not escaped this conditioned reflex to television. All too often the educator has given the medium a wide berth, fearing that the use of it would develop passivity in students and that learning would become secondary to an entertaining television presentation. Even more dogmatic are some television people who proclaim flatly, "Television is entertainment. Period."

Therefore, when we in Metropolitan Pittsburgh assumed the task of determining how effective television teaching could be on the elementary

grade level, not only did the educators recognize the difficulties and challenge to be met in teaching fifth-grade reading, but equally concerned and challenged were the television producer and staff who had to take a medium which has been highly exploited for entertainment and use it for academic learning.

There were no guideposts to point the way. Up until this time, educational television programming for this age youngster had been in the area of enrichment. Programs had been presented periodically and could be used at the discretion of the classroom teacher. But this was different. Every day during the school year, there was a captive audience required to watch the television lessons in reading, and to receive from the programs their year of learning in this most basic of subjects.

Such a serious responsibility demanded a reappraisal of the television medium. It also placed a definitive role upon the medium itself, the teaching comes first. Television is the tool of the teacher and must be used to enhance and reinforce the teaching, never to dominate it.

### **TV Programming Has Both Assets and Limitations**

To use television effectively as an educational tool, one must be cogni-

zant of its assets and limitations when compared with the orthodox pattern of classroom teaching. Obviously, there are the following limitations:

- Actual live contact between teacher and student is impossible.
- The responsibility of pacing the lesson content must rest with the television teacher and the producer. It cannot result from student response.
- There is no flexibility in the amount of time the television teacher wishes to spend on a particular lesson.
- There can be no standardized format, no set routine for the lessons. Each calls for its own peculiar manner of presentation, and must be planned as an entity with an opening, a development of subject matter, and a close.
- Lens ratio and size of viewing screen restrict the area to be seen.
- The ultimate effectiveness of the teaching is not determined by the television teacher alone, but is the mutual responsibility of the television teacher, the production staff, and the classroom teacher in whose room the lesson is being viewed.

Used correctly, the assets of television have compensating value for its limitations, plus additional assets impossible in classroom teaching. Lack of personal contact between student and teacher is partially overcome by the fact that television is an intimate medium. Each of us views television subjectively. If you doubt this, remember how many times you have

had violent objections to a commercial which did not please you on television. Most likely, you have observed the same product advertised in a newspaper or magazine. It is unlikely that a printed "commercial" ever elicited an immediate response as deeply subjective from you.

Translated into our needs, television can bring the teacher to each child. He can be made to feel that she belongs to him alone. Her eyes look into his. She talks to him. To him, she is not concerned with the other hundreds of boys and girls also learning by television.

#### **Visuals Are Vital**

Television is a visual medium. Unless visuals are used, the medium has been misused and its total effectiveness negated. We know that elementary school children cannot be taught by the lecture method; their attention span is short. Television offers possibilities for visual material which will demand their attention and stimulate their interest. Furthermore, each child can view the visual as if it were sitting on top of his own desk, whether he be seated in the front row or the last. Television has another unique quality; it affords the opportunity to bring visual effects simultaneously to many classrooms which would be impractical or impossible in one classroom.

Visuals, skillfully used, can transport the child to any setting, anywhere—a feat impossible in the classroom.

Television lessons must be geared in content and pacing for the average intelligence level of the captive student audience. This is an undeniable

hardship on the television teacher. But, at the same time, the classroom teacher, free of teaching responsibilities, is given a unique opportunity to observe closely individual differences among her students and to act upon her observations.

Other pluses for television are timeliness and flexibility. Current events can be presented on the spur of the moment or made to appear to be happening at the moment. As for flexibility, Miss Nardozza taught reading from such diverse places as the campus of West Point, on a nature trail, in an Art gallery, in the reference room of a library, without leaving the studio.

#### **Teacher and Producer Must Work Together**

One all-important asset remains. The correct use of the medium can create positive psychological attitudes and mental receptiveness. A well-produced television lesson eliminates all extraneous and diverting material, both visually and orally, thereby allowing the teacher to present and develop her subject matter in her best, most concise and most interesting way without interruption and with relief from the many little harassments which are a part of the classroom teacher's life—even to the erasing of the chalkboard.

A very astute observer once remarked to me, "There is only one relationship that is closer than marriage and that is the relationship between the television teacher and the producer." In spite of the facetious twist in his statement, a great deal of truth supports his words. The assets of television cannot be exploited, the limi-

tations cannot be minimized unless the teacher and the producer have a mutual objective and assume a joint responsibility for reaching that objective. There must be willingness to plan together in complete trust and understanding of one another's problems, to compromise when necessary, and to give untold hours of thought and execution to some detail which may be covered in a matter of seconds.

To achieve an intimate and pleasing relationship with a child miles away from her, the teacher must be willing to take suggestions from the producer about her personal appearance, her movements, her voice, her emotional set, even her clothing.

To exploit the visual potential of the medium, the teacher must be willing "to teach" the producer. By explaining what idea or concept must be taught and how she prefers to teach it, she can be rewarded with visual aids which might be ineffective in a classroom but are dynamic on television.

Both must remain alert and creative in spotting and eliminating all extraneous, diverting, unnecessary elements which could detract from the teacher and her lesson.

The producer must explore every possible resource to supply visual assistance to the teacher and must be willing to make suggestions, but never demand that certain ideas or objects be used.

Once the lesson has been planned by the teacher, the producer has the duty of enhancing that lesson with the best television can offer. Then it is the responsibility of the producer to see



that everyone involved, artist, photographer, stenographer, director, floor manager, cameramen, audio men, engineers and other television personnel perform their duties with split-second timing and complete coordination. In television teaching, there is no going back and no chance to run over the allotted time. Each second is important. Each second has been planned and must be executed as planned to guarantee that the captive audience will see and hear everything necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the material presented.

#### **Best Lessons Are Simple in Production**

As a result, we attempted to make our television presentation of Miss Nardoza's reading lessons appear effortless and simple in production. The teacher was all-important and was shown in close-up. There were no fancy long shots, no unusual camera movements, no unnatural shooting angles. There was no theme music, no title cards, and no credit lines given at the beginning and ending of the programs. We strived to make each camera shot aesthetically pleasing, to plan production in such a way that the teacher would present her lesson with a minimum of mechanical techniques visible to the viewer.

Such simplicity cannot be achieved without knowledge of the medium and an imaginative and critical approach to the purpose of the telecast. Everything seen on the program had a reason for being there, a purpose to fulfill.

From the very beginning, Miss Nardoza and I were determined that these television lessons would be more

than teacher, text, and chalkboard. The desire to exploit the assets, the extra television offers, was uppermost in our mutual planning.

The task was a hard and demanding one. At the end of the year, an accumulative count of the visual aids and television extras developed to assist the teacher in teaching 175 reading lessons revealed the magnitude of the undertaking. Eight silent films and nine sound films, 165 pop-ons, 15 special settings, 45 special sound effects and tape recordings, 700 actual objects or models of objects, 850 still pictures and 1500 studio cards were used. We capitalized upon our medium by presenting visually special devices more than 100 times, students' work 140 times, and extension reading books 145 times. Six unseen or pantomiming guests and 52 featured guests offered television extras impossible in classrooms.

#### **A Good Beginning Has Been Made**

The challenge was ever with us: the race against time, the demand for creating new approaches, the patient attention to details, the singleness of purpose, and the functional use of television to reinforce the integrity of the teaching.

The way in which we met the challenge this past year in televising reading lessons for fifth graders is only the beginning. Further study and utilization of its assets for educational purposes may prove that television is more than a great selling and entertaining device. It could prove to be a most valuable aid to greater learning for all our children.



Feature Theme:

## **Parents and the Reading Program**

**T**HERE was a day when we said that the teaching of reading didn't begin until a child came to school. He started in the first grade, we said, and his reading lesson took place sometime during the school day. Probably there were a few who said, "Let the parents take care of the child's physical and spiritual growth, and let the school take care of his intellectual growth including his development in reading." It made a neat division of labor to put it that way, but it was as unrealistic as the Land of Oz.

For we know that a child's progress in reading is strongly influenced by the experiences of his whole world, not just his classroom world. And in his out-of-school world, there is no influence so all-pervading as the influence of the parents. By reading nursery rhymes to the child as a tiny tot, they are beginning to give him experiences with oral language that may affect his approach to reading when he is six or even sixteen. By providing him with picture books and by answering his questions about the illustrations, they are developing his readiness for reading even while he is in the playpen.

The same constructive influence can continue as the child grows older and becomes an independent reader. Certainly the influence continues, but it may develop into a negative influence resulting from the parent's apathy or even his over-anxiety regarding his child's reading.

What is the parent's role in his child's reading? How can his co-operation be gained for the best development of the child? How can he be guided so that his influence is a positive rather than a negative one?

What does the parent want to know about his child's reading? What does he know that would be helpful to the teacher? How can the parent and the teacher work together so that the child can develop to his greatest potential?

To answer these questions and many more, the feature section of this issue of *The Reading Teacher* has been planned around the theme "Parents and the Reading Program." Four major articles explain the significance of the parents' influence on reading and suggest specific procedures for working with parents and for helping them. As a further aid in this direction a list of books, pamphlets, films and filmstrips for parents has been prepared. These materials should be valuable as the basis of discussion with individual parents and PTA groups.

I hope that these articles and this list of materials about the teaching of reading will give inspiration, understanding, and specific know-how by which more and more parents can become a positive influence in the development of children's reading skills and reading pleasures.

Nancy Larrick  
Guest Editor

## **"I Was in the Dark on This Reading Business," Says One Parent**

by MARTHA M. BUCHROEDER (a Parent)

● WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

FIRST OF ALL, let me establish myself as a *satisfied* parent. Any doubts or fears that I may have had as to the way my children are being taught to read have been dispelled. But I think that most parents have been left pretty much in the dark as to the *whys* and *wherefores* of certain methods of teaching reading. They have never heard the reasons that have proved certain methods are superior to others.

I am fortunate to live in a community where our school program is tops. Members of our board of education, our administrators and our teachers are excellent. With this superior staff, we are able to utilize the most modern methods in our education system. We have an excellent supply of teaching materials including books and audio-visual aids. In every school—elementary as well as secondary—we have guidance counselors.

In our elementary schools, we have replaced the old report card program with a program of parent-teacher conferences which have proved most helpful to me as a parent. Let me explain how this plan works. Three times a year each parent is invited to the school to discuss the child's progress—or lack of progress—and anything at all that may be on the parent's mind or the teacher's. This is a private interview, and adequate time is allotted to each parent. With a system

such as this, it would seem impossible for a parent to be in the dark on any subject—whether it be a subject that is taught in school, or a subject dealing with the child's development, etc.

### **Parents in the Dark**

However, there are still a few parents in our community who are in the dark. These are probably the ones who are too timid to ask questions, or maybe they fall into the category of the parents who are too busy to keep their appointments for the interview. Whatever the reason, one can always find some parent who says: "Why do they teach my child to read with those cards? . . . My child can't spell, and it's not much wonder. They don't teach them to read as they taught me. . . . I don't like to go to school and ask questions. I feel like a dope. . . . My child doesn't know how to sound out words. . . . The teacher scares me. . . . Yes, the teacher wants me to ask questions, but then she answers them with words that I don't understand."

I have heard all of these questions and comments. Back of each one lies a dissatisfaction or a misunderstanding. Why? Is it possible that the parent has not been made to feel welcome? Or hasn't enough time been given to helping the parent understand the new methods and the reasons for employing these methods?

Parents are extremely sensitive and eager when it comes to their children,

you know. A lot of us don't understand why the old system of phonics was ruled out of the elementary program. We feel that you are experimenting with our children, and when we see the way they spell, we are not too sure that the experiment is a wise one. A parent's personal reaction to a teacher is certainly an individual thing, but a parent's reaction to the explanation of a method can only be one of enlightenment and, we hope, understanding.

Two years ago I was given the opportunity of interviewing parents of another community with regard to their children's reading. The parents were picked at random from the alphabetical file of the children in the elementary schools of that community. I visited very wealthy homes and very poor homes and, of course, the in-betweens. This was an experience that I shall never forget and one that made me all the more grateful for the schools in my own community.

One of the parents I interviewed said that her child's teacher had actually asked her not to come to school to ask questions. Others said they had been told to keep hands off and leave reading to the teacher. Many felt that their children were doing all right so they had no questions. One mother, and I will always remember her, told me in very broken English, that she told her daughter when she entered first grade: "I don't care if you don't learn nothing in school so long as you learn to read. If you can read, you can understand anything or anybody and you can get along. Maybe there wouldn't even be any wars if people

could understand everybody and if you understand what you read." I asked this mother how her daughter was doing in school and learned she was an excellent scholar and an excellent reader. I think the mother's concern and interest must have helped.

Like that mother, I think all of us feel that reading is the basis of all understanding. That is why parents are so concerned when they see and hear evidences of a new system for teaching an old art in our schools. My daughter had a most wonderful teacher in the first grade. I did not understand the way reading was being taught, but I certainly was not going to question a system that was producing such wonderful results.

Last year my daughter was in junior high school. And not until then did I really understand what was going on as she was taught to read.

Like many other parents I had been guilty of trying to sound so intellectual and learned about my child's reading. I, too, had let glib phrases slip off my tongue, such as "They ought to teach more phonics; this flash system can't teach a thing." Or "Maybe I should give my child a little phonics at home to supplement what they learn at school."

#### **My Enlightenment Came**

My enlightenment came at a recent PTA meeting where my daughter's first-grade teacher explained the reading program with the aid of a very interesting movie. The movie had been made over a period of a year by the guidance counselor and the principal. It showed the steps of reading readiness and the actual teaching of

reading, from kindergarten through the sixth grade. I learned that on the kindergarten level the teacher uses all kinds of materials and all kinds of experiences to prepare the child for the transition from a talking language to a reading language. Then in first grade, the child begins to build a basic sight vocabulary which gives him a feeling of success. Because the teacher wants to give the child this feeling of success, the work in phonics does not begin until after the child has a foundation of at least a hundred sight words. The emphasis at this level is placed on the meaning of the word rather than the mechanics of that word. In the second grade the work begins with the long and the short vowels, and this continues through the third grade. In the fourth grade, the teacher promotes fluency by having the child write and read his own stories. Phrase reading is important. Also at this level the dictionary is introduced, and the importance of the library is brought into play, both for extra reading and library instruction. These are weekly periods. This program then is intensified for fifth and sixth grades.

For teachers, this is an old story. But for me as a parent it was the first time I understood the wisdom behind the teaching of my child through her elementary school days. I could readily see why quick success is so important to the child at first. (Naturally he won't have that quick success if he has to take each word apart and sound it out.) I learned that different children react to different ways

of learning to read. For example, one child will learn more quickly if he sees something, another will learn more quickly if he hears the same something, and still another will learn more quickly if he hears and writes at the same time. But not until that PTA meeting did I understand and appreciate how these facts influence the teaching methods you use today. This program lasted only thirty-five minutes, yet it explained seven years of work that had been spent on my child. I wish every parent could get the same rich and stimulating explanation.

#### **In Awe of the Teachers**

You know we parents stand a little in awe of teachers. You are a very big influence in our children's lives. In the elementary grades you have the actual molding of their careers right in your hands, and reading is the basis of those careers. Please don't blame us if we are a little slow to understand. Maybe no one has taken the trouble to explain to us that phonics is being taught today and the alphabet hasn't been forgotten.

But a lot will depend on how you deal with parents. Do you prefer them to stay at home and ask their questions from their friends? Or do you actually invite them to listen to your ideas and welcome their questions? Do you give them parent-level answers? It is very helpful if you do because then the parent and the teacher can work together through understanding. And who benefits? The child, of course. That is what you are there for, and what we are here for.



## **What Do Parents' Questions Mean?**

by A. STERL ARTLEY

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**W**ITHIN the last several years, articles have been written and studies reported with respect to the questions parents ask about and the reactions they have to the reading program. Typical of these reports are those of Freeland (1), Larrick (2), Peterson (3), and Pressnall (4). For those who are concerned with parent relations, and that includes pretty much all of us, these studies will bear careful reading. Their implications and conclusions will have direct applications to many situations.

### **What Do Parents Ask About?**

A composite list of questions parents ask would be something like this:

1. What is a readiness program? Why aren't children given readers on their entrance to the first grade?
2. How can children learn to read if they don't know their ABCs? Shall I teach them the ABCs before they go to school?
3. Is phonics taught in our schools? How can children recognize a word if they don't know the sounds of the letters?
4. Is the alphabet ever taught in sequence? When?
5. Why are children grouped for reading? Why aren't all of the children reading from the same reader?
6. What provisions are made for the retarded readers in the room? What percentage of the group is retarded in reading?
7. Is phonics the only procedure that is of value in attacking unfamiliar words?
8. What can I do about the comic-book problem?
9. How are children being taught to read mathematics, science, and geography?
10. Shouldn't children be expected to attain a certain norm or standard before being promoted to the next grade?
11. What books and magazines should be recommended for home reading?
12. What methods are being used in teaching reading today?
13. How can I help my child with his reading at home?
14. What is the reason for a child's inability to perceive the new words he meets in unfamiliar material?

### **What Do the Questions Mean?**

An analysis of these questions and the reactions that parents have to the reading program might reveal certain significant generalizations. In the first place, it appears that parents are asking a lot of questions they shouldn't have to ask. They are asking questions that should have been answered by school people as part of a good program of school interpretation. Parents should not have to ask, "What is a readiness program?" or "Why are children grouped for reading?" Yet



these questions appear on almost every list. Schools that are sensitive to the need for good parent relations anticipate such basic questions and through a positive program of explanation and interpretation acquaint the parents with what their schools are doing, and why.

In one school, for example, the reading supervisor has prepared an excellent series of slides with accompanying explanatory text describing the reading program of the first grade. She presents the series and gives her talk to parent groups, service clubs, and PTA meetings. Rare is the parent in this community who would have a question to ask about the first-grade philosophy or instructional procedures. Seldom is there a negative reaction to the readiness program or to the provisions being made for individual differences. Other schools keep their parents informed through radio and TV programs and newspaper accounts. Regardless of method, the aim is to inform the parents so that they will have an understanding of basic issues.

In the second place, it appears that some of the questions parents ask reveal their doubts about the effectiveness of the program their schools are providing. They wonder whether the right methods are being employed and whether their Jack and Jill are reading as well as they should. Behind the queries, "What is the reason for a child's inability to recognize the new words he meets in unfamiliar material?" and "How can I help my child with his reading at home?" there is the subtle implication that the parent

is dissatisfied with what is happening at school. And the parent might be right!

Before school people can interpret and explain, they must be sure that what they have in their reading program is the best they can provide. They must be sure that its psychology is sound, and that it is getting results. In some places it would be difficult to explain to parents either the logic behind or the results obtained from some type of programs. It would be embarrassing to explain the absence of a systematic program in word-attack, or difficult to defend a word-attack program which is narrow in scope. It would be equally hard to justify a program where "activity" in one form or another is substituted for sound instruction. Admittedly standardized test norms have limitations when it comes to interpreting the reading growth in a given classroom. Yet it is important to know how reading achievement in a school compares to the achievement of a hypothetical standardization group, and what may be the explanation if it does not compare favorably.

Frankly, is your reading program one that could bear close scrutiny? Are the results those of which you can be proud? Freeland (1) describes a situation where the principal of a large consolidated school who had been describing complacently his reading program discovered on critical examination that he not only questioned the merits of his own program, but realized that the teachers had little common agreement as to what con-

stituted a good program. He found it necessary to put his own house in order before attempting a school-wide program of interpretation. Where schools are making a continuous appraisal of their program, where they are capitalizing on strengths and honestly attempting to eliminate weaknesses, and where they are keeping their parents informed about the effective job they are doing, there will be few questions asked or few reactions made indicating basic dissatisfaction.

In the third place, many of the questions parents ask and the reactions they make to the reading program indicate gross misunderstandings of the nature of reading and major misconceptions of the process by which it is taught. Such is evidenced in, "How can a child learn to read if he doesn't know the ABCs?" "How can a child recognize words if he doesn't know the sounds of all the letters?" "Shouldn't the children do more oral reading?" These questions and others like them beg to be answered, not in terms of a smug and concise textbook answer, but rather in terms of an explanation of the nature of the reading process. I believe it is on this score that we have failed our patrons most grievously. Rather than taking the time and making the effort to explain to our parents the kind of reading maturity with which we are concerned and the nature of the total reading act, we have encouraged and answered surface questions with terse and easy explanations.

It may be that the questions parents never ask are the ones we should try

to answer: "What does one do if he is truly to interpret?" "What part does imagery — seeing, feeling, hearing — play in reading?" "Why should a mature reader react to what he reads?" "How can reading be made an act that truly modifies thinking and behaving?" Answers to these questions provide a context for such specifics as the ABCs, phonics, and oral reading. One needs to see reading not in terms of letters, sounds, and factual recall of specific facts, but in terms of its breadth and scope, in terms of the effect it has on the development of the individual.

#### **Helping Parents Understand**

What is reading? What do teachers do when they teach a child to read in a modern program?

When most of us were in the elementary school, we approached reading as a subject to be learned rather than as a source of enjoyment. The stories lent themselves better to word drill than to a reconstruction of experience that had reality and significance to the young reader. As a result, there was nothing to discuss or react to after they were read. No one was motivated to say, "That story made me think of what my sister did yesterday," or "In a similar situation this is what I would have done." Reading was a process of saying the words, not something to be lived, to be experienced, or to be enjoyed in its own right.

The concept of reading underlying this approach and the resulting instructional procedures left much to be desired. Reading is more than saying the words. It is *experiencing* the feelings, the impressions, the imagery, the

sensations that the author had as he wrote the passage. Though one cannot climb mountains, or live in Holland, or experience colonial times, he can do all of these things through the medium of reading. Reading may be an avenue of experience for children if properly taught.

Several processes are involved in the overall process of interpretation. In the first place, the reader must be able to attach meaning to the symbols on the page. "Sounding out" a word or attacking it by any other procedure does no good if the child does not know what the word means. Teaching a child to read, then, is not merely a matter of providing phonic drills, or even of stringing together sounds in sequence to unlock a word. He must learn to *associate sound and meaning* with the printed symbols he sees.

The good reader also creates images as he reads. He sees in his mind's eye a rapid moving picture in technicolor, and he hears the sound of the action portrayed. In addition he senses the appropriate reaction of taste and smell. In other words, he uses his past experiences to make the printed symbols come to life. This process is important, for it is only as the reader experiences richly what he reads that the ideas have a chance of being woven into the fabric of his personality.

At the same time that the good reader responds to sensory detail, he also reacts to ideas, situations, action, characters. He thinks and feels with the people in the story. He may approve of some of the characters, disapprove of others. Though the writer

is responsible for the action and events of the story and for the way he relates them, it is up to the reader to react to the ideas and to determine their applicability. In the reading program today the child is given time to discuss, ponder, evaluate, make judgments, and organize ideas. He is taught to react.

But even reacting is not the final step in reading. The process is not complete until the reader combines what he has read with what he already knows, thus adding to his knowledge and understanding or, in other cases, modifying or reinforcing his ideas and attitudes. He is a different person because of what he has read. In a real sense reading has shaped his personality.

As parents come to understand the total reading act, they can develop a true appreciation for what the teacher is trying to do in the reading program. Once they understand, such details as phonics, ABCs, oral reading, and readiness fall into their proper perspective. They see reading not so much as a process of skill acquisition but as a means of promoting social and personal development.

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## **Parents Can Help in the Reading Program**

by RUSSELL G. STAUFFER, DIRECTOR

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IT SEEMS almost too commonplace to say that parents can help. It is self-evident and, therefore, common knowledge that parents do help influence the interests and attitudes of their children. It is just as apparent, too, that children do not leave their interests, attitudes, dispositions, and work habits at home when they go to school. Neither do they leave them in school when they go home. What may not be so evident and so commonly known is that those people who are engaged in directing and influencing the interests and attitudes of others are constantly in danger of overlooking the importance of sequential development, of improvement of disposition, and of the educative effect of an experience (4).

Adults are most conscious of directing the conduct of children when faced with a situation that demands immediate action. A child too close to the edge of a dam may be snatched away roughly. Sharp words or a threat may prevent him from straying to the edge again by arousing fear of what the adult involved may do. But later on in a situation where the conditions may be slightly altered, the child may be led to do an even more dangerous thing. Demands for direct action, as in this example, frequently cause adults to overlook the opportunity for educative guidance. This child could have been led to foresee the consequences

of his act, presuming that he was capable of understanding what those with more experience had to tell him, so that in future similar situations he could guide his acts more intelligently.

Also overlooked in the process of directing or influencing or controlling interests and attitudes is the importance of the degree to which the children participate in guiding the direction in which their actions take them. By doing their share and by participating actively, children come to appropriate the purposes that initiate the activity, the methods that are used, the skills that are needed, and become imbued with the emotional spirit or vigor that is evident.

The purposes of this paper are, therefore, to show that interests and attitudes are assimilated gradually and become of educative value if the learner becomes aware of what they accomplish and judges the value of the results, and if he is a sharer or partner in the activity. Further purposes are to show that parents can and do help foster permanent attitudes and interests toward reading, and that this is a chief responsibility of the home; whereas a chief role of the school is to teach specific techniques in reading.

### **Attitudes and Interests**

Attitudes may be defined as mental habits or "mental habitudes" by which an individual adjusts to the expecta-



tions, demands, approvals, and condemnations of others (3). This means that attitudes are associated with an individual's social environment. A child's attitude toward reading is connected with the attitude of the people about him. His mental and emotional dispositions are gradually shaped and modified and, in turn, influence his action.

A family, let us say, loves to read. Many of the things that they do, the success for which they strive, the achievements they value are connected with reading and gaining knowledge. By association in this family, a child has his actions modified accordingly—first as he listens to reading and then, when he can, by reading. As he listens or reads, he wins approval and advancement; as he refrains, he is shut out from favorable recognition. Therefore, his ideas turn to reading because only in this way, as his actions agree with those of others, can he obtain the happiness he desires. And in so acting, the same ideas and emotions are aroused in him that animate the rest of the family. Thus, gradually, his attitude toward reading is assimilated.

As habits—even though mental habits—it is implied that the attitudes or dispositions function with economy and efficiency. This means that an individual with a favorable attitude toward books not only gets used to the habit of turning to books but also that he does so whenever occasion arises. Furthermore, with such mental habits toward reading, the individual does not wait for books to turn up so that he may get busy. But quite to the con-

trary, he is acquainted with materials and equipment. He knows the skills to be used—the reflection and reasoning needed—to pacify the uneasiness he may feel and to satisfy his craving. Almost like the person addicted to dope, the reader knows or finds out how to proceed. And some readers become addicts, and allow the reading habit to control them. It is evident, then, that a favorable attitude toward reading, while desirable in proper proportion must also be controlled intelligently.

A favorable attitude toward reading, the organized mental habit of turning to books, is acquired and is a product of experience. Interests, while to some degree native and original, are also dependent upon interaction with a social medium. Interests, too, are formed under the influence of associations with others. Therefore, we cannot truly say that interests are original and native—because the directions they take reflect the social conditions in which they are formed. To say that a person is interested is equivalent to saying that he is engrossed and carried away by. If he takes interest in an activity or an object, he is alert and attentive and persistent. To interest a person means to alert him to the purposes and consequences to be achieved, to develop the activity in such a way that it touches his experiences, and brings about a connection with his needs and capabilities.

A person is not interested in reading *per se* but is interested in reading about something. Reading in and of itself is not a subject. It takes all



knowledge as its content. To interest a person in reading about some object or activity is to find something that has an aim or purpose and attainable ends for him. This does not mean that a sugar coating has to be used to secure attention and inspire effort. The problem is to discover materials about objects or activities that are connected with the person's concerns. It is for this reason that the human interest factor has such attention-getting and holding appeal. It is a form of experiencing with which all can identify.

In summary, both interests and attitudes, to a large degree, spring up from and are shaped by an individual's social environment. This means, then, to quote from the platform endorsed by the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth—"that children require for their fullest development regard for their individual mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities from *all who touch their lives*." This gives special emphasis to the role of the parents. Their attitudes and interests, likes and dislikes, expectations and aspirations are foundation stones in the educative process of their children.

To have their children read they must read, either widely or intensively, and they must make books available. By so doing they cause the children to seek pleasure as they do and to have the same ideas and emotions. Parents want their children to be happy, healthy, and successful. Children, in turn, feel equally as strong about their parents and want to please them.

Since interests as well as attitudes

are formed by association with others, parents can be constantly on the alert for opportunities to develop concepts that touch the children's lives and are connected with their needs. If parents are interested, children are interested. If parents are enthusiastic, children most likely will be. Enthusiasm is contagious and need never be quarantined.

### **The Role of the Parent**

As Artley says in *Your Child Learns to Read* (1, p. 199), interests and tastes come from guidance and the guidance to be appropriate must . . . "see to it that children find books readily accessible . . ." and "must see that the books with which they (adults) keep their children supplied are good."

A summer-school class of in-service teachers at the University of Delaware taking a course in basic reading instruction was asked to tell about how a parent or parents in their school experience had influenced the reading interests and attitudes of their children. Their responses confirmed the points by Artley and those stated earlier in this article. Illustrative examples follow:

Bill Whaley said, "Mr. and Mrs. Redman helped their children by beginning early in the children's lives to arouse their children's curiosity. They answered children's questions and if they didn't know the answer they and the children would go to an encyclopedia or other source. The children were used to seeing reading done for a purpose."

Marion Baird wrote: "The mother of a boy in my third grade read to Jeff a great deal from his earliest years on. (Their home is full of books.) She

has always talked with him a great deal about flowers and insects, automobiles, airplanes, and stars. She has provided him with materials for his hobby. Moreover, she and her husband showed an interest in what Jeff had read and brought him into the conversation at the dinner table and elsewhere."

Ruth Buckingham tells about Betsy. "She was exposed to books from the time she was at the picture-book stage until the present time when she is devouring *The Wizard of Oz*. She has been influenced by the many books in her home."

Mrs. Watkins told about her sixth grade. "The youngsters in my grade come from homes in which the parents are well educated. They have access to good record collections, books, slides, etc. Many of them have seen many parts of our country."

In *Language Arts for Today's Children*, the following point is made about children who do not have opportunities such as those described above.

"On the other hand, vast numbers of children have been denied the joy of home experiences with books . . .

" . . . For many immature or underprivileged children, reading from books must be delayed until a background of experience can be developed and until they achieve physical, social, and mental maturity sufficient for approaching the tools of reading. In some cases, a prereading program is planned to meet their needs, one which follows that offered by the kindergarten." (2, p. 153).

The many specifics mentioned in this section show how parents can and do help and how significant the role of parents is. This being true, it seems important to consider briefly what may be done to influence even more par-

ents to provide the stimulation and encouragement so essential to children's success in reading.

### What Schools Can Do

In her recent article in the July, 1956, issue of *The Ladies Home Journal*, Dorothy Thompson tells about the positive influences her parents had on her learning-to-read experience. In her home there was daily reading aloud, self-denial for the purchase of books so that, as she says, "books appeared in my childish mind as a source of pleasure and as costly treasures" (5, p. 11). Then she goes on to say, "How, you will ask, was I taught to read? Of course, I have no recollection of the process." And this is true of most adults.

But often in their anxiety to have their children succeed, parents take on the role of the school or condemn the methods used to teach to the direct consternation of the very children they are trying to help. So often parents clamor for a return to the method by which they were taught, using the good-old-days approach; and in most instances, as in Miss Thompson's case, "they really have no recollection of the process." Therefore, an active campaign can be most helpful which informs parents about how reading is taught as a thinking process, a process of getting meaning. This may be done through classroom visits, demonstrations, PTA talks, and a viewing of reading-score statistics which compare children of twenty years ago with those of today.

School publications may be prepared such as the bulletin entitled

"Learning to Read in the Madison Public Schools." The purpose of this publication is to show the citizens of Madison, Wisconsin, a pictured story of how their children learn to read. Similar bulletins have been prepared in many other schools, notably Wilmington, Delaware, and New York City.

The Illinois Curriculum Program Bulletin No. 18 entitled "Reading for Living—An Index to Reading Materials" provides an excellent source of materials with which to give answers to parents who ask, "What book should I buy?" Similarly, the *Combined Book Exhibit* bulletin including the recent books of forty-seven publishers provides a selected, classified, graded, annotated, and indexed book list for children and young people. In addition, the appendix to this index lists books "which will help adults understand the ways in which children develop and in which they use books and materials in the home and the school."

Other publications have been made available in recent years which give parents suggestions and ideas about what they can do. For example, a volume distributed by the University of Delaware Bookstore is entitled *What Parents Can Do to Help Their Children in Reading*.

It seems, too, that one more recommendation is in order. Since the role of the parents and the home is so very important in molding good readers, and since in many instances children are denied the joys and privileges of a home experience with books, an ac-

tive educational campaign for parents in a community, especially the parents of pre-school children, would be most worthwhile. This would be the "ounce of prevention" approach and, therefore, to be endorsed highly.

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#### **Plans Are Now Being Made for the Second Annual Convention**

Your officers have begun plans for the second annual convention of the International Reading Association, which will be held in New York City, May 10 and 11. The convention center will be Hotel New Yorker and Manhattan Center, next door. Dr. Albert J. Harris, president-elect, will serve as Convention Manager. Your suggestions for program theme and participants are eagerly solicited by your president. Attendance is expected to surpass this year's 2,400 at Chicago. If you are a council member, now is the time to discuss your plans for representation at the Annual Assembly Meeting.

## ***Parents and Their Children's Reading Interests***

by HERBERT C. RUDMAN

● MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

AS SOON AS THE FIRST pair of gym shoes crosses the threshold of the first-grade room on the first day of school, the teacher is faced with the prospect of teaching reading skills to children who may have been practicing some of these skills since age two. Classroom teachers alone do not teach reading. The first teachers of many children are their parents who have patiently (and sometimes not so patiently) given non-systematic reading instruction to their offspring.

### **The Readiness Program at Home**

Parents have long been recognized as having a vital influence on the development of intellectual growth through providing varied experiences for youngsters—trips to farms, cities, zoos, beaches and the like. They have also contributed to those readiness activities closely related to what is conceived of as actual reading. Many of the magazines written for children have sections devoted to these readiness activities: matching games, tracing lines and coloring pictures, left-right and top-bottom exercises, classifying separate objects, developing sequence, and other exercises designed to develop basic skills needed in reading. Although these readiness activities are developed systematically in the early grades of the elementary school, many youngsters have al-

ready had these experiences in the home.

Another readiness experience of the pre-school youngster is having books read to him by his parents. From as early as age one, many a child handles periodicals and books. Even then he comes to associate books with new experiences brought to him via the squiggly lines and colorful pictures. He learns to tell stories as well as listen to them. He experiments with language. (For example, he substitutes "Jack-o-lantern pie" for "pumpkin pie" and "sommerhead" for "sommersault"). He learns that a book has a definite starting point, and a front and a back. In addition to books, parents read signs to their pre-schoolers—"Esso," "Shell," "A&P," "Stop," "Go" and a host of others. Children have pictures "read" to them, whole stories growing from a single picture. The child is taught by the parent that symbols—be they pictures or printed words—stand for a set of experiences.

A goodly portion, then, of the reading readiness program is helped or hindered by the influence of parents before the child enters school. Does this parental concern for children's development of reading skills and interests continue when the child enters the elementary school? There is evidence to indicate that it does.



### The Parent and Later Reading Experiences

A recent survey by Larrick<sup>1</sup> indicated that over 40 per cent of the parents interviewed wanted to know how reading was now taught in the public schools, and how parents could help children develop their reading skills further. Approximately 60 per cent of the parents indicated that they were interested in increasing their children's reading interests and in learning how to guide their children in further developing them. Although parents indicated a desire to help their children develop their reading interests and their reading skills, parents seemed to be at a loss to recommend specific books for their children.

In another study<sup>2</sup> financed by grants from the Spencer Press, Incorporated, a comprehensive survey was made of children's reading interests, ask-about interests, and look-up behavior and of the expectations of parents, teachers and librarians concerning these three aspects of children's interests.

More than 11,000 children and adults returned questionnaires. This figure involved 6,313 pupils in grades 4 through 8; 4,531 parents of these pupils; 212 teachers and 169 librarians. An interesting facet of the study was the relationship that existed between children's reading interests and the desires that parents, teachers, and librarians held for children's reading interests. Below I will summarize some

of the findings of this study as they relate to three major questions.

#### 1. WHAT DO PARENTS WANT CHILDREN TO READ ABOUT?

Parents, as a group, centered their choices in the general areas of literature, animals, sports and recreation, the formal school subjects, and the social sciences.

*Literature.* Within the general area of literature, parents were most concerned that their children become extremely familiar with reference books. This category alone characterized a little less than one-third of the total response of the parents! The fact that parents, more than pupils, teachers, or librarians, would choose reference books for their children might be explained in a number of ways: (1) parents may have seen reference books contributing heavily to children's intellectual growth; (2) parents may have seen these books as having much prestige value among other adults; (3) parents may have been influenced greatly by the sales campaigns of reference-book publishers; (4) parents may have believed that teachers and librarians placed great value on reference books in learning situations.

In descending order, other topics receiving a sizable response in the category of literature were stories of adventure and travel, teen-agers, children, and mystery.

*Animals.* Parents' choices for children's reading were stated in rather general terms concerning the category of animals. They indicated a desire for their children to read about horses, dogs, cats and the like. But

<sup>1</sup>Nancy Larrick, "Let's Enlist the Parents," *Education* 76: 522-535, (May, 1956).

<sup>2</sup>Herbert C. Rudman, "The Informational Needs and Reading Interests of Children in Grades IV through VIII," *Elementary School Journal*, 55: 502-512, (May, 1955).

they were not specific as to just what about horses they wanted children to read, e.g., the care of horses, ways of riding horses, stories about horses.

*Sports and recreation.* In this area, parents indicated a desire for their children to read articles and stories concerning hunting, camping, arts and crafts, hobbies, and baseball. Since this study was made during the spring of the year, one cannot help wondering whether the season of the year influenced parents' reading choices for their children. Had the study been administered in the fall of the year, it seems likely that parents' choices would have centered around football, basketball, and other activities more closely related to the fall season.

One big area which could be described only as "Miscellaneous" received a number of responses from parents. In this miscellaneous category parents indicated an extremely strong desire for their children to read about religion. Related to this strong choice were also choices dealing with ethics and values of Western society. In fact, this area of miscellaneous responses was actually second choice of the parents for the reading activities of their children.

When parents' reading choices for children were compared by the kind of population centers some rather interesting information came to light. Rural parents showed consistently greater interest in the social sciences and sports and recreation topics than did either urban or metropolitan parents. Metropolitan parents showed greater interest in having their chil-

dren read the formal school subjects, i.e., English, mathematics, spelling, science, history and the like, and in reading about art, music, dramatics, and writing, than did the parents in either of the other two kinds of population centers. Parents living in urban population centers showed a consistently greater interest in the area of literature. In connection with this last finding it is interesting to note that in the area of literature, *rural parents showed the least interest in reference books.*

## 2. DO CHILDREN READ WHAT THEIR PARENTS WANT THEM TO READ?

An indication of the strength of the parents' influence upon children's reading interests can be seen in a comparison of topics children listed that they wished to read about and the topics that parents desired their children to read about. Over 71 per cent of the topics listed by children as items they wanted to read about were the same as those listed by parents. The top six reading interests of children were the general areas of literature, animals, sports and recreation, social studies, machines and applied science, and famous people. Parents' desires for their children's reading choices centered in literature, religion and ethics, animals, sports and recreation, other school subjects, and social studies. Parents indicated a very strong desire for their children to read about religion and ethics; in fact 17 per cent of all the choices listed by parents dealt with these topics. On the other hand only three per cent of the children's choices for reading cen-

tered about religion and ethics.

What is significant here is not the differences noted between children's choices and their parents' choices but the similarities. Even though, as Larrick pointed out,<sup>3</sup> parents have difficulty in knowing what books or periodicals to recommend specifically to their children, apparently their influence is felt in the kinds of material they wish their children to read. In fact, almost three-fourths of the reading interests of children correspond to what parents wish them to read.

### 3. DO PARENTS, TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS AGREE CONCERNING WHAT THEY WANT CHILDREN TO READ?

Parents, teachers, and librarians are in closer agreement with each other concerning their expectations of children's reading choices than they are when compared as separate groups to what children say they wish to read about. With the exception of the major category of sports and recreation, teachers and librarians agree perfectly with parents concerning the areas in which they wanted children to read.

Both teachers and librarians placed more emphasis upon children's reading about famous people than did parents who emphasized sports and recreation instead. Librarians placed more emphasis on famous people than either of the other two adult groups.

Another fact worth noting is that parents wanted their children to read about topics dealing with religion more than did either teachers or librarians.

Within the area of literature, parents more than either of the other adult groups wanted their children to choose reference books for their reading material. Of the four groups studied (pupils, parents, teachers and librarians) only parents placed such strong emphasis upon the use of reference books. Another interesting and somewhat startling observation emerged from the findings of this study. Although adults agreed closely with each other concerning what they wanted children to read, the children were more heavily influenced by their parents' desires for their reading material than they were by either teachers or librarians.

In a report on another aspect of the same study, Shores<sup>4</sup> pointed up some revealing answers to two interesting questions:

*Can parents predict accurately the reading interests of their children?* When asked "If your child were to get a book as a present what would he or she like it to be about?" parents responded with a surprising degree of accuracy concerning the desires of their children for reading material. The accuracy of this statement was verified by checking the children's responses to a similar question. The children were asked, "If someone were to give you a book as a present what would you like it to be about?" As a corollary of this finding, when children were asked to predict what their parents would buy for them, an overwhelming proportion of them in-

<sup>3</sup>Larrick, *op. cit.*, p. 524

<sup>4</sup>J. Harlan Shores, "Reading Interests and Informational Needs of Children in Grades Four to Eight," *Elementary English*, 31: 493-500 (December, 1954).

dicated their parents would provide a book more in keeping with their reading interests than would their teachers.

*Can teachers predict accurately parents' choices of reading materials for their children?* Although teachers were able to predict with some degree of accuracy that parents wanted their children to read in the general areas of literature, animals, and sports and recreation, they tended to overemphasize these desires and underestimate the wishes of parents for their children to read about religion, ethics and values, and such school subjects as history, geography, and the like. In other words, *teachers are less familiar with parental attitudes concerning reading than they are about children's reading.*

#### **Implications for Teaching Practice**

Thus, evidence available from these studies leads to the conclusion that school personnel need to work more closely with parents in the development of children's reading habits and interests. Many recommendations have been made in the past as to ways in which the schools might keep parents informed about how reading is taught in the public schools, the kinds of material read in the schools, and the like. Public relations programs growing out of these recommendations have often taken the form of publicity releases, news letters and the like, and have placed an overemphasis upon one-way communication—school to home.

Since studies reveal that the home

has the greater influence on children's reading interests and upon the development within children of purposes for reading, it would seem that a closer examination needs to be made of precisely how the school can utilize parental influence in activities that employ reading skills and that draw upon reading interests.

#### **What Can the Teacher Do to Utilize Parental Influences?**

A beginning step might be a survey similar to the surveys described in the preceding section. The teacher might send a questionnaire to the parents of the children in his class in which the following questions would be asked:

1. When your children turned to a book (not a dictionary) not long ago to find out about something, what did he or she want to find out about?
2. If you could buy any book as a present for your child, what would it be about?
3. If your child could study in school anything that he wanted to, what would you like him to study about?

The response to these three open-ended questions would give the teacher a wealth of information concerning parental desires for their children and would give the teacher a clue as to the kinds of reading material he could supply to children in his classroom. To complete the picture, a parallel questionnaire could be given to the pupils:

1. When you turned to a book (not a dictionary) not long ago to find out about something what did you want to find out about?



2. If you could buy any book, what would it be about?
3. If you could study, in school, anything that you wanted to, what would you like to study about?

The questionnaire could be administered orally to non-readers or beginning readers and would be useful at all grade levels. On the basis of this information, the teacher could organize a book club for the parents of pupils in his room. This would be a book club which would place in the hands of parents reviews and books on the topic areas favored by children and parents. Parents could be asked to read and comment upon the various books given to them. The teacher could then develop a parent-approved list of books which would be every bit as valuable to him as the lists published by professional educators and librarians. School libraries could then purchase reading material based, in part, upon these book lists.

What should not be overlooked is the fact that the studies described in the preceding sections and other interest studies also show areas of least interest on the parts of children and their parents. For example, art, music, and poetry received only one per cent of the responses by children, and only two per cent of parents' choices for their children's reading. By working closely with parents and children, an attempt could be made to analyze the worth of these neglected areas and then to place within the home and school material in these areas that parents and children felt ought to be given further attention.

#### A Note of Caution

In two<sup>5</sup> of the three studies described, a differentiation was made between reading interests, ask-about interests (those interests indicated by questions children and adults would ask) and look-up behavior. This distinction between these three types of interests was made because it was felt that each was a discreet interest and not necessarily related. The results of the study bore out this hypothesis. Therefore, school personnel need to take into account not only the reading interests of children, but need to be familiar with the other two aspects of children's interests if they are to utilize these findings in the total school program. This article has dealt with only one of the three forms of children's interests. Teachers ought not to assume that the results herein described are indicative of children's interests *per se*, nor can they assume that children are interested only in those things they read about.

#### In Conclusion

Parents' attitudes about reading for themselves and their children are an important factor in the development of reading habits and interests in children, a factor which must be considered by teachers in all content areas which utilize reading skills. The available data would indicate that (1) parents are more sensitive to the reading interests of their children than are teachers or librarians; (2) parents have greater influence over their children's reading habits and interests than do teachers or librarians (3) par-

<sup>5</sup>Rudman, *op. cit.*, p. 502  
Shores, *op. cit.*, p. 493

ents indicate a lack of familiarity with specific books or magazines that they would recommend to their children, and (4) parents harbor some misconceptions concerning some materials of instruction, *e.g.*, reference books.

What seems to be needed is an involvement of parents in the total

school program to familiarize them with some aspects of the program. Teachers and principals will benefit from involving parents by gaining access to some of the insights parents hold concerning their children's reading and can thus create a stronger school program.

### **For Parents: Pamphlets, Books, Movies and Filmstrips About Children's Reading**

**B**ECAUSE TEACHERS, librarians, and reading specialists are eager to have parents know more about the reading program, there is constant demand for pamphlets, books, movies, and filmstrips which will tell the story. To meet this demand the following list has been assembled from a vast array of printed and audio-visual materials. Each item in this list has been checked for its content and availability. It is believed that all of these materials are appropriate for distribution or showing to parent groups and that they will facilitate parent understanding of current methods of teaching reading.

This list was assembled by Myrtle Bonn of the Division of Press and Radio Relations, National Education Association. The motion pictures and filmstrips were previewed and selected by Dr. Anna L. Hyer, Associate Executive Secretary, Department of Audio-Visual Instruction, National Education Association.

#### **PAMPHLETS**

##### *Janie Learns to Read*

The story of Janie's first few weeks at school introduces parents to the methods and tools used to teach beginning readers and explains the individual needs of children. 1954. 40 p. National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. 50 cents; 100 or more copies, 30 cents each.

##### *Sailing into Reading*

Helps parents understand the entire elementary-school reading program and gives suggestions on ways parents can help. Based on original manuscript by Nila Banton Smith. 1956. 40 p. National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. 50 cents; 10 or more copies, 40 cents.

##### *Yes, We Teach Reading*

This illustrated pamphlet answers 23 questions which parents commonly

ask about reading, such as "Why do children read in small groups?" and "What can I do at home to help my child in reading?" Prepared by Mary Duane. 1953. 11 p. Metropolitan School Study Council, 525 W. 120 Street, New York 27. 15 cents.

*Why Do the Schools Teach Reading as They Do?*

A step-by-step, fact-packed explanation of current reading procedures, how and why they were developed. A multilithed report of a presentation made by Nila Banton Smith at the National School Public Relations Seminar, Lake Forest, Illinois. 1955. 16 p. National School Public Relations Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. 35 cents.

REPRINTS OF TIMELY ARTICLES

The following current articles on the teaching of reading in today's schools have appeared in leading magazines and are now available as reprints from the National School Public Relations Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. 15 cents each.

"Answers to Questions About Reading" by Paul Witty. Described what is meant by the "phonic" and the "word" methods and explains why many average and even bright pupils read poorly. Reprinted from the *National Parent-Teacher*, Sept., 1955. 4 p.

"Johnny Can Read!" by Arthur F. Corey. Bluntly, specifically the author punches away at the "five major errors" on which the Flesch book is based. More than an attack, this is valuable in its own right. Reprinted

from the *San Francisco Examiner*, June, 1955. 8 p.

"I'm Not Suffering From Flesch Wounds" by James M. Spinning. Confessing to a "phonic" hangover himself, the author says he and millions of this generation envy today's youngsters who read three and four times faster and with equal or better understanding. Reprinted from *The Nation's Schools*, Sept., 1955. 4 p.

"Do Kids Really Learn to Read Nowadays?" Yes, says this article, and goes on to describe why some of the modern methods of teaching children to read are considered more effective than the old methods. Reprinted from *Changing Times, The Kiplinger Magazine*, Oct., 1953. 4 p.

"The Dirt and Trash That Kids Are Reading." Children do read some trash and parents do worry about it. This article surveys the problem objectively, shows parents how to separate reading wheat from chaff. Reprinted from *Changing Times, The Kiplinger Magazine*, Nov., 1954. 4 p.

BOOKS

*Your Child's Reading Today* by Josette Frank. Children's reading interests and needs in relation to the challenge of TV, radio, movies, and comics. Includes booklists for nursery age through the early teens. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1954. 328 p. \$3.75.

"Bequest of Wings." *A Family's Pleasures With Books* by Annis Duff. How parents can create an interest in a variety of types of reading materials. These are very literary parents, however. New York: Viking Press, 1946. 269 p. \$2.50.

## MOTION PICTURES

*Skippy and the Three R's*

29min sd b&w and color free-loan from National Education Assn., Press and Radio Div., 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

Shows how a first-grade boy is taught reading, writing, and arithmetic by a teacher who utilizes the boy's interests to help him realize his own need for learning.

*They All Learn to Read*

26min sd b&w \$110, rent \$4.50 from Syracuse University, Audio-Visual Center, 121 College Place, Syracuse 10, N. Y.

An experienced teacher provides effective reading instruction for her third-grade class which is divided into four groups on the basis of reading ability. Each group is taught independently on its own level; children having difficulty with reading receive individual instruction.

*Better Reading*

12min sd b&w \$50, rent \$2.50; color \$100, rent \$4 from Encyclopoedia Britannica Films, 1150 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Ill.

The story of an intelligent high

school boy whose work improves as he overcomes several faulty reading habits. Illustrates the methods used by a reading clinic in helping the boy increase his reading speed and understanding and enlarge his vocabulary.

*Why Jimmy Can't Read*

15min sd b&w \$75, rent \$4 from Syracuse University, Audio-Visual Center, 121 College Place, Syracuse, N. Y.

The story of nine-year-old Jimmy in fourth grade and his reading problems told as a typical case history from the Syracuse Reading Clinic. Documents typical procedures used in diagnosis and the services of a reading clinic working with parents and teachers.

## FILMSTRIPS

*Learning to Read*

45 frames si with captions, color \$5 from Stanley Bowmar Company, 12 Cleveland Avenue, Valhalla, N. Y. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

An art work outline which shows ways parents can help develop reading interest in pre-school and primary children.



## What Research Says to the Reading Teacher

—AGATHA TOWNSEND—

RESEARCH CONSULTANT, EDUCATIONAL RECORDS BUREAU

### Who Reads About Reading?

What help is research to the teaching of reading and the development of reading programs? Dr. Anne McKillop, in a recent contribution surveying research in the psychology of school subjects, remarks that over the past twenty-five years "most often the leading lady was reading."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, one is faced with continuing and repeated questions from the public press, from discussions with parents and school boards, from women's magazines and news journals, about the status of reading teaching and learning.

Research *can* fit into the picture in many ways. It can, by survey and record analysis, provide some clear answers about reading levels "then and now," in this community or that, those sorts of schools or others (the reader may fill in his own favorites). It can provide the reading teacher with methods of instruction which have been tested under rigorously controlled conditions — not just sprightly devices filched from attractive teachers. It can evaluate procedures of initial teaching and remediation—and do this without concern for the popular side in a controversy or with as little regard as is humanly possible for the names lined

up on any side. Research is a prime requisite for the production of dependable tests of individual and group progress—a real need unless one believes that parental insight requires no help to tell how well a child reads, or how well he should read.

A look at the record should convince us that reading research has actually tackled and contributed to problems in all these areas. By actual count, research studies and books and monographs in the field of reading over the last twenty-three years number more than nineteen hundred.<sup>2</sup> To these should be added hundreds of articles and notes on classroom practice which, while they are not all readily classified as research, have none the less encouraged and enlightened the instructor. Uncounted other studies have been made but not published. These include theses, summaries of the endeavors of workshops and work conferences, cooperative studies made by school faculties, research done by individuals and classes in colleges and universities, and so on. Nor can anyone dare to assess the influence of splendid teachers of teachers who do not always pause to document their

<sup>1</sup> Anne S. McKillop in "Educational Psychology," Chapter III of "Twenty-five Years of Educational Research." *Review of Educational Research* 26:241-63; June 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the summaries of reading research issued by the Educational Records Bureau in 1941, 1946, and 1955: Bulletin No. 52, *Ten years of Research in Reading*; Bulletin No. 46, *Another Five Years of Research in Reading*; Bulletin No. 64, *Eight More Years of Research in Reading*. New York: Educational Records Bureau.

suggestions but who influence whole generations of readers by their theories.

With such an optimistic view of research, how is any criticism possible? Criticism and even censure are possible because in the last few years many attacks on our schools have centered on the field of reading, and on the presumed status of readers in our elementary and secondary schools and our colleges. In spite of the fact that reading is definitely one of the "communication skills," or even "arts," what is known is not always well disseminated and too many of the potential consumers of research results are still unaware of them.

What task is set out for the teacher who wishes to keep abreast of current studies? Much research makes itself known indirectly—through college courses or clinical training programs, through policies set up for schools by supervisors who may read more about reading than teachers do, through conferences and institutes. But what about the teacher or clinician who wishes to follow the trend of research independently, as a measure of professional self-education? Can he afford to read about reading? An analysis of the latest summary made by Dr. Gray reveals that the ninety-one research articles appearing in one year are found in over twenty-five American journals and half a dozen foreign English-speaking publications.<sup>3</sup> It is true that approximately forty of the articles would be available to the subscriber to eight of the journals. The forty dollars

or so of annual expenditure necessary for the individual who wishes to receive these journals regularly might be a means of making a direct personal contribution to the further publication of similar studies.

Admittedly, there are advantages in this broad scattering of the seed. Articles can be placed so that they may reach those whose special interests are represented by the grade levels, techniques, or purposes of the investigations. Reading is at least kept in the attention of a broad group of people. The main weakness of the present situation seems to be that few, if any, full reports are included in some of the national and state journals reaching the largest numbers of teachers, but rather that research tends to be reported in research journals, read by research workers. Is that a type of inbreeding? Is such a crabwise approach to the classroom and clinic audience necessary?

Toward the beginning of these comments, the point was made that reading research can be vital for the eventual improvement of programs. It was also suggested that in these days the reading program must not only be good—it must be understood and supported by the patrons of the schools, colleges, and clinics. What kind of task is set out for the parent, school board member, or other citizen who wishes to follow the development of theory and practice, but who never heard of the research journals? What is the relation between the research published for the professional readers and the picture given to the laymen?

Looking back again at the past year,

<sup>3</sup>Wm. S. Gray, "Summary of Reading Investigations July 1, 1954 to June 30, 1955," *Journal of Educational Research* 49:401-36; February 1956.

what do we find? The *Education Index* and the general periodical guide list no more than twenty articles, of which nearly half deal with one phase of a current debate on teaching methods. Nearly all the entries emphasize controversy, negative criticism, and the more spectacular aspects of the need to do remedial teaching in schools and colleges. The half dozen articles in which informed educators reply are impressive and deeply gratifying. But the major questions remain. Should we be satisfied with the presentation given to teaching, to the research which un-

derlies good teaching, and to the effort and attention both layman and professional are giving to improvement? Are we creating difficulties for ourselves when facts are so hard to come by? Are we content to answer criticism when we might be making a case of our own? "A big row over reading" may be just what we need. When reading becomes a topical matter, we have a far better chance than ever during periods of complacency to make our points and make them known. Fact can be more exciting than fantasy.



## BETTER READERS FOR OUR TIMES

The Official Proceedings of the  
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William S. Gray and Nancy Larrick, Editors

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## What Other Magazines Are Saying About the Teaching of Reading

MURIEL POTTER LANGMAN  
EASTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Benbrook, Joyce, "Criteria for Writing Informative Material for Retarded Readers." *Elementary School Journal*, May 1956.

The purposes of this study were to develop criteria for writing factual materials for retarded readers, to prepare material using such criteria, and to try out and appraise the material prepared. Eighteen directions for the preparation of the material are given. The investigator prepared materials on "Early Ways of Measuring Time" and determined their reading level by the use of two readability formulas. The materials were then used with a group of one hundred sixth-grade pupils whose achievement scores were 1.5 years or more below reading expectancy, their IQs being 90 or above, and socio-economic or language disability being ruled out as a possible cause of reading retardation. The selections were read and understood satisfactorily by 93 per cent of the pupils participating.

The materials and the criteria were appraised by 40 classroom teachers, 33 remedial reading teachers and 27 children's librarians. A questionnaire was used to obtain their opinions on the extent to which the criteria had been followed in the making of the sample selections, the interest which these selections might have for retarded readers in Grades V and VI, and the literary merit of the material. More than three-fourths of these experts believed the criteria had been satisfactorily followed in the material and that the criteria would be used effectively in writing additional informative material. The topics used in the material were not so generally approved as interest-producing, although in actual

use with the children more than 90 per cent of the children were interested and expressed a desire to know more about the subject. There was general agreement that the material was of high literary quality, and might be interesting to average and superior readers as well as retarded ones.

Bliesmer, Emery P., "A Comparison of Results of Various Capacity Tests Used with Retarded Readers." *Elementary School Journal*, May 1956.

Bliesmer used the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Capacity Test and three group intelligence tests in a study of 80 children to compare the several scores and to determine whether the group tests are useful in determining the reading capacity of retarded readers. None of the group tests provided estimates of reading capacity directly equivalent to the Stanford-Binet results. The Durrell-Sullivan test tended to give higher estimates of reading capacity than the Stanford-Binet, while the Kuhlman-Anderson and California Short Form Test of Mental Maturity gave lower estimates.

*Education, Reading Comprehension*  
Number, May 1956.

This issue contains eleven articles each of which deserves review. Among them are a discussion of reading instruction in European schools, three articles on problems of reading instruction in secondary schools, one on parents' attitude toward reading instruction and several on methods. You will want to read the issue straight through.

Mills, Robert E., "An Evaluation of Techniques for Teaching Word Recog-

# 5 RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND READING SPECIALISTS

## HELPING THE NON-READING PUPIL IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

By Harrison Bullock

The non-reading pupil is handicapped not only by the reading disability itself, but also by the emotional disturbance concomitant with failure. How he became a non-reading pupil and how he can be helped both in the regular classroom and in special reading classes are discussed by the author. The emphasis is on diagnosis and on providing an atmosphere and a situation in which the pupil can experience some kind of success, however small. Reading materials of interest to non-reading adolescents, case histories of several pupils, and detailed discussion of teaching techniques give classroom teachers and reading specialists concrete leads for helping non-reading pupils.

1956 180 pp. Cloth \$3.75

## POSITIONS IN THE FIELD OF READING

By Kathryn Imogene Dever

What positions are there in the field of reading? To find out, the author sent out 3000 questionnaires. Responses revealed that major functions were teaching, testing and diagnosis, supervision, and counseling; lesser duties included administrative and clerical work, research, public relations, and community activities. Using these data, administrators can better appraise their own programs and staffing; teachers will gain a clearer understanding of the help they can expect from reading specialists; and reading specialists themselves will benefit from descriptions of their jobs.

1956 165 pp. Cloth \$4.25

## READING ABILITY AND HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

By Ruth Pentty

Dr. Pentty found that poor readers are often dissatisfied with school. To suggest what teachers and administrators can do to help poor readers succeed in school despite their reading difficulties is the purpose of this book. A detailed description of the Battle Creek High School program illustrates the author's main points, with discussion of materials used, kinds of help needed and provided; roles of librarians, subject-matter teachers, and other school personnel; and coordination and evaluation.

1956 93 pp. Cloth \$2.75

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE READER'S ATTITUDE AND CERTAIN TYPES OF READING RESPONSE

By Anne Selley McKillop

Exploring the effect of the reader's prejudice on his comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of the material he reads, the author found a tendency to label as false or stupid passages which did not fit in with the reader's attitudes. These findings will interest reading specialists trying to help youngsters make judgments on the basis of materials used.

1952 101 pp. Cloth \$2.75

## READING AIDS THROUGH THE GRADES: Three hundred developmental reading activities—Revised and enlarged

By David H. Russell and Etta E. Karp

This manual in remedial reading for teachers of grades 1 to 8 provides an organized collection of successful devices to stimulate pupils' reading and to help them overcome their particular difficulties. Illustrated, with extensive bibliography.

1951; 5th printing, 1956 120 pp. Paper \$1.10

Order from: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 27, New York

nitition." *Elementary School Journal*, January 1956.

The results of this experimental study substantiate the correctness of empirical findings and recommendations already in widespread use. The investigator taught unfamiliar words to groups of children by four formalized procedures: visual, phonic, kinaesthetic, and a combination of the three. He examined the relationships between a number of factors and his results, and found that, for example, the phonic method was least successful with children of low intelligence; that children of high intelligence learn easily by any teaching method; that the kinaesthetic method was most effective in third grade, where the children had become interested in handwriting. His implications stress the necessity for determining "which method is best for which child."

Leestma, Robert, "The Film-Reader Program." *Elementary English*, February 1956.

The possibility of equalizing the uneven opportunity for experience of beginning readers by using educational films and correlated film readers is discussed in this article. The sequence described is (1) visual experience with pictures plus auditory experience through the accompanying sound track of explanation; (2) discussion of the film experience; (3) experience with the same concepts through pictures from the film sequence presented in a book (in the same order as the film presentation) and accompanied by printed words and phrases from the sound track, which are read aloud. Typical follow-up questions on comprehension are then used.

Leestma says film readers cannot replace good all-round reading instruction, but are intended to "provide a new and effective way for helping young children make the connection between . . . the word and the thing."

Barbe, Walter B. and Tina S. Waterhouse, "An Experimental Program in Reading." *Elementary English*, February 1956.

This article points up the extent to which remedial and developmental reading methods have become two names for the same approach.

In this study the investigators arranged to group all the children in the upper elementary grades of one school by reading level, for one period each day. Grouping was arranged by scores on a standardized test and an informal reading test by a clinician. The groups were called reading clubs, and the teacher for each club was seldom the child's regular classroom teacher. An unfamiliar basal series was used in the clubs, and no mention was made of the grade level of the book used. Teaching procedures were those recommended in the reader manuals.

In November, soon after the clubs were initiated, the children were given the *Gates Reading Survey* Form 1. Form 2 of the *Survey* was given the following May. The results were heartening. Grades IV and VI each gained .9 of a reading grade during the six-month period. Grade V gained 1.2 grades. Children reported that they enjoyed the reading clubs (in which no grades were given). Teachers reported more material could be covered when the range of reading achievement had been reduced within the group.

The investigators suggest that such an arrangement makes it easier for properly adjusted reading instruction to be continued at the upper elementary level. They found that, because the purposes and procedures of this program had been clearly explained to parents, no objection was made to this ability grouping. Teachers reported that teaching these relatively homogeneous groups was easier and more effective. There was more opportunity to provide an enriched program for advanced readers. The investigators point out, however, that this type

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of grouping does not eliminate the necessity for grouping children during regular classroom instruction.

Durkee, Frank M., "Why Johnny Reads," *Elementary School Journal*, April 1956.

This article describes the work of a second-grade teacher who determined to use interest as a means of increasing the amount and quality of reading in her group. Excursions, experiences with the arts, varied and lively classroom activities and a coordinated program including parent-child reading resulted in a remarkable amount of reading. The class of 27 boys and girls read 977 books during the school year, in addition to basic readers. For individual children the range was from eighty books down to ten books each. At the end of the year only one pupil ranked below his grade placement level on the average of the three *Gates Primary Reading* tests, although the range of intelligence was 91-140.

The writer concludes that by giving children purposes for reading and pleasure in reading the mechanics of reading can be developed more effectively than by drill, and that "the more he reads, the better he reads."

Miller, Vera V. and W. C. Lanton, "Reading Achievement of School Children — Then and Now," *Elementary English*, February 1956.

This article adds to the rapidly accumulating evidence that reading is taught as well, if not better, than twenty years ago. In the schools of Evanston, Illinois, third, fifth, and eighth grade pupils were given reading tests used in the 30's. At each level the performance of today's children was slightly but significantly better than that of twenty years ago, even though children today are on the average younger as a group for their grade placements.

Bradley, Beatrice E., "An Experimental Study of the Readiness Approach to



Reading." *Elementary School Journal*, February 1956.

This study followed two matched groups, one taught with emphasis on reading readiness and individual differences, the other by a formal approach in which reading from books began immediately upon entrance to first grade, through the first three grades. When the achievement of the groups was compared at the end of third grade, the children whose formal reading instruction did not begin until they were "ready" obtained significantly lower scores at the end of the first year on standardized reading tests. (This result, obtained in other studies, has caused some confusion in the thinking of school administrators.) However, at the end of the second year there was no significant difference in the reading achievement of the experimental and the control groups, and at the end of the third year, in work-study skills the experimental group was found "above grade standard and showed slight gains, some statistically significant, over the control group."

The investigator points out that the program for the experimental group provided many experiences which the control group missed, and produced at least equally satisfactory achievement. She urges, therefore, that school administrators give their full support to reading programs such as the one the author describes, which are based on the prin-

ciples of child development rather than on "traditional" method.

Larrick, Nancy, "What Parents Think about Children's Reading." *Elementary English*, April 1956.

Five public elementary schools in the suburban New York area cooperated in this study. A random sample of 107 parents of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children was visited and interviewed to obtain information about their attitudes toward reading instruction in the schools. The investigator concludes that there was general satisfaction among those parents about the progress their children are making in reading. There was some interest expressed in the methods used in teaching, and a variety of attitudes expressed toward these methods. There was considerable interest in having children develop reading into a satisfying and pleasurable activity. Seventy-one parents reported that children enjoyed reading in their free time.

A significant comment in this article is that the outspoken criticism of a few anxious parents impressed the *interviewers* more than the "less provocative" comments of many well-satisfied parents. This conclusion is in agreement with the publicity given in the last year to criticism of reading instruction in spite of evidence that it is in no way less successful and effective than in the past.

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## Interesting Books For the Reading Teacher

—ELOISE B. CASON—

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### PHONICS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Roberts, Clyde. *Word Attack: A Way to Better Reading*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956. Pp. 139. \$1.72.

Recently many people have felt that youngsters could progress more rapidly in learning to read if they were given instruction in phonics. Miss Roberts shares this feeling. With the exception of a lesson on the use of context clues and one on phrasing, her entire book is made up of exercises designed to strengthen the junior high school student's use of phonics and structural analysis clues.

A youngster who uses this text will find material on the use of the dictionary, sounding vowels and consonants, syllabication and vocabulary building. Each lesson consists of a careful explanation of the rule or technique and a list of words to which the student can apply his newly learned skill.

In the guide the teacher is given a very detailed account of classroom procedures to be followed as well as a short discussion of the place of word attack techniques in the teaching of reading.

Such a collection of exercises as this can be useful to a classroom teacher if she remembers that only some of the reading disability cases need intensive phonics work and that those who appear to be able to profit from such instruction need not do every exercise in the book.

Florence Heisler  
Brooklyn College

### WORD MAGIC

Crowley, Ada Fuller. *Magic in Words: A handbook of Suggestions for Teachers and Others of Many Ways for Finding Words a Source of Interest as Well as of Use*. New York: Exposition Press, 1955. Pp. 81. \$3.00.

That this little volume has been heartily endorsed by top-ranking experts in the field of the teaching of reading is scarcely surprising. The portrait of the inspired reading teacher that Mrs. Crowley unconsciously draws is magically proportioned to fit every leader in the field. There is that same faith in the excitement of discovery, feeling for history, sure footing in language, patience and ingenuity and love for man as well as words that characterize the gifted teacher of language arts. Her statement of purpose might be taken under consideration, in fact, as a slogan for an association of reading teachers: "To equip all pupils with the basic tools for reading and speech, and the enrichment of their vocabulary on all academic levels without harassing the teacher and without drudgery for the individual taught."

This is not a handbook for the beginner. It dips and swoops in teasingly brief chapters through such broad areas as "How Language Changes," "Synonyms and Other Word Classifications," "Semantics," and the like, without benefit of charts or diagrams, or even an index. Part of the significance of its title might be assigned to the magically haphazard way words pop up all over, totally unrelated in category, but enchantingly alive and memorable. The linguistically seasoned who have become somewhat disheartened in their teaching

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of reading may find their sparkle returning at a bound, through amazement upon finding some of their own personal "tricks" down in print on these little pages. The two-page bibliography of standard books on language from which Mrs. Crowley has quoted will help the beginner bridge the gap between a real appreciation of the task of developing word power in others, and a well-intentioned but floundering ballyhoo. The enthusiasm for words as personalities will readily impress all who read *MAGIC IN WORDS*, whether initiate or novice. But that its author's success in arousing interest in the language arts is based on sound learning and wide experience, as well as love, is not equally clearly conveyed.

Marion W. Starling  
Brooklyn College

### **SPELLING SELF-TAUGHT AT COLLEGE**

Pollock, T. C., and Baker, W. D., *The University Spelling Book*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955. Pp.vi-122. \$1.50.

Every college English teacher knows Professor Pollock's extensive research to help him answer the question: "What words do students actually misspell in college?" (Pollock, T. C., "Spelling Report", *College English*, November 1954, pp. 102 ff.) "A total of 599 college teachers of English in fifty-two colleges and universities in twenty-seven different states cooperated" with Professor Pollock in his spelling report by sending him "a theoretical maximum of 39,850" words misspelled by college students.

Out of this study and other research of Professors Pollock and Baker has come *The University Spelling Book*. There are many fine things about this book. On the very practical side: it is small, paper-covered, clearly printed, and it is comparatively inexpensive. As a teaching tool, it is practical, too: the



"Preface" states that the book "can be used by students working alone." In the first pages, a system for self-teaching is outlined in mature but friendly terms. The practice exercises not only are good memory-teasers but also are imaginative devices that will stimulate the student to add examples of his own, particularly when he is told that "George Bernard Shaw pointed out that the word *fish* could be spelled *ghoti*, with *gh* as in *tough*, *o* as in *women*, and *ti* as in *na-tion*." The great frustration of the student who is willing to use the dictionary as a spelling aid but who does not know the first few letters of the word to be checked is relieved by a very practical suggestion: "... look up a word similar in meaning," e.g., *photography*, look up *picture*, defined as "a representation produced by drawing, *photography*, etc." Chapter 9, "Words in Specialized Fields," is a challenge for the student who believes that he must spell and write correctly only in an English class.

Catherine Tully Ernst  
Brooklyn College

#### ON CORRECTING COLLEGE THEMES

Thomas, Ednah Shepard. *Evaluating Student Themes*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955. Pp.vii-39. \$.75.

"This pamphlet has grown out of a project undertaken by the Committee on the Training of Teachers, Department of English, University of Wisconsin," the author states. A "Foreword to the Teach-

er" describes the evaluating procedure, and the body of the pamphlet illustrates this procedure with fourteen student themes which have been divided into three groups: "Unsatisfactory Quality," "Middle Quality," "Superior Quality." For teachers-in-training, the comments in the "Foreword" on the writing cycle of "preparation, realization, and follow-through" in which both teacher and student are united are instructive. The emphasis on the teacher's responsibility in the terminal comment "to recognize strength as well as weakness" in the student's writing is a part of sound professional advice that should be acted on by both new and experienced teachers.

The illustrative themes are the work of college freshmen, and the teaching approach used is, of course, appropriate to the college level. The beginning college teacher should be informed, however, that a considerable portion of the long terminal comments given here is a proper part of individual conference work with the student. As a tool in the training of junior and senior high school teachers—from which training project it seems to have developed—this pamphlet may be the source of confusion rather than "help in establishing a sense of direction." The modifications in the tone of the teacher's comment as, indeed, the modifications in the student's achievement on educational levels below that of college need to be most carefully explored in terms of themes from junior and senior high school students.

Catherine Tully Ernst  
Brooklyn College

### ***Authors of Articles Relating to Reading***

by WALTER B. BARBE  
University of Chattanooga

The thought has occurred to the author of this article numerous times that perhaps most of the articles in reading are published by the same few people whose names keep reappearing. Actually, there appeared to be little way of checking such a thought without having arbitrarily to include or exclude certain types of articles which were on related topics. With the recent appearance of a compilation by Traxler and Townsend, however, such a check became a rather simple undertaking.

*Eight More Years of Research in Reading* by Arthur E. Traxler and Agatha Townsend, which appeared in January, 1955 covers the period from 1945 through 1952 and contains some material from 1953. This book, which includes a review of many articles other than those which could be called research in the strict sense of the word, is an invaluable aid to persons making studies in the field of reading. Not only does it point out the areas in which adequate research has been done, but it indicates those areas in which additional research is needed. The book itself is of utmost interest. It clearly covers trends, and brings together similar types of studies so that they may be viewed by the reader without the disadvantages of too much time elapsing between reading. In addition to this, the author of the present article noticed something else which aroused his interest. Of the 760 articles which are listed in Traxler and Townsend's compilation, certain names, well known in the field of reading, kept reappearing. The present author became curious to know how many different authors were represented in

such a list of publications, and exactly who were those who published the most. The results were surprising in some respects.

There were 760 articles listed in the report. There were 625 authors or co-authors listed in the Index of names. This would indicate that by in large most authors were one article authors. Their initial flare for writing ended after they had published one piece. (Or, of course, it might indicate that they published only one piece each eight years.) The co-authors confuse the issue here somewhat but assuming that they published one piece of their own, over 80 per cent of the articles came from such one-article authors. Less than 20 per cent came from the remaining 126 people who published more than one article.

Then turning to see who published the largest number of articles, it was found that 28 people had written four or more articles in the field of reading over the eight year period. These 28 are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
AUTHORS OF FOUR OR MORE ARTICLES  
ON READING IN THE 1945-53 PERIOD

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>
1. Gray, William S. ....	27
2. Tinker, Miles ....	26
3. Traxler, Arthur E. ....	16
4. Witty, Paul A. ....	14
5. Russell, David H. ....	13
6. Sheldon, William D. ....	10
7. Paterson, Donald G. ....	9
8. Dolch, Edward W. ....	8
9. Eames, Thomas H. ....	8
10. Betts, Emmett A. ....	7
11. Hildreth, Gertrude ....	7
12. Malter, Morton ....	7
13. Townsend, Agatha ....	7
14. Anderson, Irving H. ....	6
15. Bond, Guy L. ....	5
16. Gates, Arthur I. ....	5
17. Lorge, Irving ....	5
18. MacLatchy, Josephine ....	5

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>
19. Smith, Nila B. ....	5
20. Spache, George ....	5
21. Artley, A. S. ....	4
22. Barbe, Walter B. ....	4
23. Davis, Fred B. ....	4
24. Mallison, George ....	4
25. Preston, Ralph C. ....	4
26. Robinson, Helen ....	4
27. Stauffer, Russell ....	4
28. Sturm, Harold ....	4

Obviously, Gray and Timker published far more than did any other authors. Since the list included editing year-books and the like, Gray's list was as extensive as would have been expected. Nineteen of Tinker's articles came under the heading of Hygiene of Reading. They dealt mostly with vision. Traxler's were better distributed in the field, with the largest number (six) being on reading tests. Only four of Witty's were in one area, corrective and remedial teaching, with the rest spread rather evenly throughout the field of reading. Russell's appeared to be rather evenly spread through the field, also.

In examining Table 1 it is quickly noticeable how few of the names are not ones closely associated with the International Reading Association. A quick estimate would be that no more than five are not closely allied with IRA. Of these five, most published during the earlier part of the period covered by Traxler and Townsend's compilation.

It is apparent from these figures that most of the articles in reading are actually written by one article authors. The big names in the field actually contribute only a small percentage of the articles which appear, even though they publish rather extensively. This is accounted for by the fact that there is such a tremendous quantity of publications in this field.

### ***Evaluation of a Reading Experiment in Social Studies Classes***

by LILLIAN DIMITROFF  
Lane Technical High School  
Chicago, Illinois

As a result of constant evidence of inadequate skill in reading in my eleventh and twelfth year social studies classes, I approached the problem differently in a recent experiment. In the past I had been having pupils read aloud difficult passages and interpret them in their own words. This is most helpful, but I felt a need for something more. My program consisted of special work on vocabulary, concepts, and weekly reading practice sessions in which we tested speed and comprehension. I charted the results on a graph for each student. This gave both the pupils and the teacher something tangible by which to measure results. This, I believe, had a good psychological effect. Since each student saw his individual chart several times each semester, he became interested in his progress. The desire to improve one's reading skill is the first step toward progress.

I have been using the reading helps of a national magazine. Several of these are currently available to teachers. I stressed vocabulary and concepts; they were discussed in context. The pupils avoided the dictionary as much as possible. We figured the meanings out cooperatively from the meaning of the sentence or paragraph. I find pupils are very ready to look up meanings in the dictionary, but it is a mechanical procedure and does not make sense to many pupils. From our own experience, we know that the new words which we have acquired have been in a sentence we used. We did this type of lesson on a

*Please turn to page 62*

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## President's Message

NANCY LARRICK

Although the International Reading Association is less than a year old, it is showing vigorous growth in membership and in the expansion of its various activities. Let me report some of the achievements since the last issue of *THE READING TEACHER*.

*The First Annual Meeting*, held May 11th and 12th at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, was a tremendous success. Over 2,300 persons registered from almost every state and from several foreign countries. Delegates from Alaska and Puerto Rico came to Chicago especially for the conference. The crowd was so great that general sessions had to be run in two sections and keynote speakers were shuttled from one section to the other, reading their papers twice. Over seventy people participated in the program as speakers or discussants. There was an immediate demand for publication of the papers so that all could enjoy the complete conference program.

*Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting* will be published on a non-profit basis by *Scholastic Magazines* and will be available by September 1st. The papers have been edited by William S. Gray, Past-President, and Nancy Larrick, President of the IRA. *Better Readers for Our Times*, the conference theme, will be the title of the 176-page volume. The price for a single copy is \$2.00; \$1.50 for each additional copy purchased at the same time and sent to the same address. Orders should be sent to *Scholastic Magazines*, 33 West 42nd Street, New York City. The Officers and Directors of the IRA are deeply indebted to *Scholastic* for this very generous evidence of support.

*The 1957 Annual Meeting* will be held on May 10th and 11th in New York City at the Hotel New Yorker and at Manhattan Center next door. The Assembly, or business meeting of the organization, will be held Friday evening, May 10th. Plans for the conference program will be announced shortly. If you have any suggestions as to the theme, topics which you would like to have discussed, and speakers, please send them to the president, Nancy Larrick, Random House, 457 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

*Plans for The Reading Teacher* include an interesting array of articles and special features. Themes for the four issues are as follows: *October*: "Parents

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and the Reading Program," Guest editor, Dr. Nancy Larrick. *December*: "Classroom Organization for the Improvement of Reading," Guest editor, Dr. Gertrude Whipple, Language Arts Supervisor of the Detroit Public Schools. *February*: "Making the Most of Children's Reading Interests," Guest editor, Dr. Ruth Strickland. *April*: "Remedial and Corrective Procedures Which the Classroom Teacher Can Use."

If you have interesting teaching experiences to report or if you have suggestions as to the content of the magazine, please write to the Editor, Dr. J. Allen Figurel, Buckboard Trail, Allison Park 2, Pa.

*The Organization Committee*, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mary C. Austin, is already making plans to recruit new members and to organize new local and intermediate councils. By July 15th 33 councils had affiliated with the international organization. For information about the formation of local councils, write Dr. Mary C. Austin, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Folders telling about the organization and its work are available from Dr. Austin.

*Programs on the Teaching of Reading* are being arranged by the Program Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Albert Harris of Queens College, Flushing, New York. During the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies meeting in Cleveland at Thanksgiving, there will be two programs on the topic "Reading and the Social Studies." One is being planned for elementary school teachers and the other for secondary school teachers. Dr. Anne McKillop of Teachers College, Columbia University, is in charge of these two programs to be held on Friday, November 23rd.

On the same day in St. Louis, a program is scheduled during the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English on the topic "Network Television as a Springboard to Reading." Speakers will include Dr. Ruth Strang, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Dr. Helen Huus, University of Pennsylvania.

The Program Committee is also working with representatives of the American Association of School Administrators to arrange speakers for a series of programs on the teaching of reading to be held in Atlantic City during the annual conference of the AASA.

Thus, you will see that the International Reading Association is expanding in many directions and that its influence is being felt in many segments of the field of education. I hope that you will help in this expanding program by sending in your comments and suggestions, by soliciting new members, and by setting up a local or intermediate council in your area.

# THE ART OF EFFICIENT READING

By George D. Spache and Paul Conrad Berg,  
*University of Florida*

Combining instruction and directly related practice material, this textbook thoroughly and efficiently develops reading and vocabulary skills as a basis for more effective reading. The authors approach the skills of rate and comprehension simultaneously, stressing particularly the importance of flexibility in methods of handling different levels of reading material.

1955

273 pp

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## Council News

*Local and Intermediate Councils are urged to send news of their meetings and plans for the future to Dr. Mary C. Austin, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Lawrence Hall, Kirkland Street, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts.*

A hearty welcome is extended to the following councils whose By-Laws and charter applications have been approved by the Organization Committee during the past few months:

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### *Iowa*

Iowa State Teachers College Council.

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**PROBLEMS IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING**

By **RUTH STRANG**, Teachers College, Columbia University; **CONSTANCE M. McCULLOUGH**, San Francisco State College; and **ARTHUR E. TRAXLER**, Educational Records Bureau, New York. *McGraw-Hill Series in Education*. Second Edition. 438 pages, \$5.00

This revision presents the whole school and college reading program in which every member of the staff participates. It discusses reading programs in different kinds of situations and describes concretely the contributions of subject teachers, administrators, librarians, special teachers of reading, and reading counselors. The book formulates the diagnostic procedures each may use, the instruction materials suited to students of different reading levels and difficulties, and the possible remedial and development procedures appropriate to the students.

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**Metropolitan Toronto Council.**

Mr. M. K. McDonald, 65 Chilton Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Prospective members in the above areas may learn about the 1956-57 program of activities for each of these new councils by contacting the council presidents whose addresses are given.

**Organization Committee**

In addition to securing information about the International Reading Association from Local and Intermediate Councils you are invited to discuss plans and problems with members of the Organization Committee. A number of people have been asked to serve on this important committee for the coming year. In order that you may write to them, their addresses are included in this issue:

Chairman: Dr. Mary C. Austin, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Lawrence Hall, Kirkland Street, Cambridge 38, Mass.

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### **THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

By Leo J. Brueckner and Guy L. Bond. The diagnosis and treatment of learning difficulties in all the basic learning skills—reading, arithmetic, spelling, handwriting, and expression—are outlined in this text. Emphasis is placed on the techniques of diagnosis and treatment which experience has shown can be applied effectively by the average classroom teacher.

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### **IMPROVING READING ABILITY, 2nd Edition**

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#### Missouri Meetings

Eastern Missouri's Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association will be held on October 6, 1956, at the Senior High School in Maplewood, Missouri. The conference opens at 9:30 A.M. with a business meeting for IRA members, followed by a demonstration by Miss Kay L. Ware, General Consultant for the St. Louis Public Schools, on the "Teaching of Spelling." Dr. Helen M. Robinson, Director of the Reading Clinic at the University of Chicago, will speak at 10:30 on the topic: "The School's Responsibility for Retarded Readers and What To Do About It".

The afternoon program will feature two demonstrations; the first of these

will be given by Miss Ruth E. Schofield, General Consultant for the St. Louis Public Schols, and the second by Miss Mary York, General Consultant for the St. Louis Schools. "The Development of Reading Skills", by Dr. Helen M. Robinson will be presented at the 2:30 session.

Missouri's Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association has been scheduled for Friday afternoon, November 9, 1956, in the Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City, Missouri, with an expected attendance of more than three thousand.

The meeting at 1:15 P.M. is for members of IRA. Music will be provided by the All City Public Elementary Schools Orchestra, directed by Roy E. Tharp from 1:45-2:00. Dr. William S. Gray, University of Chicago, will present "Reading Attitudes and Skills for Our Times" at 2:00. Following this part of the program there will be a panel discussion of Dr. Gray's talk by the following panel members: Dr. A. Sterl Artley, University of Missouri; Dr. Gray; Dr. Oscar M. Haugh, University of Kansas; Miss Barbara Henderson, Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, Missouri; Dr. Robert W. Ridgeway, University of Kansas; and Dr. Lou La Brant, University of Kansas City.

Miss Mary Virginia Yancey, Chairman of the Department of Elementary Schools of the Missouri State Teachers Association, will preside at the meeting.

*Continued from page 49*

weekly magazine and also in our regular social studies books.

In addition to the regular instruction in vocabulary and concepts, a second part of this experiment consisted of testing by using an article from the *American Observer*. These classes had not seen this magazine previously. Every week we had a definite time for testing speed and comprehension on the *American Observer* article. The reading difficulty of these articles is about the same as the magazine on which we were practising vocabulary, concepts and reading. Students were timed to a quarter of a minute, and they took a comprehension test of ten questions of the same degree of difficulty each week. The papers were scored on comprehension from 0 to 100. The speed was computed by dividing total number of words by the time (to the quarter of a minute).

We did fifteen lessons in our survey.

The scores varied, of course. There was some improvement in even such a short time. Speed in reading improved in the majority of cases. Of eighty-six pupils who finished the experiment, seventy-nine showed improvement, four were at the same point as when they started, and three were lower when they finished. The chart which follows indicates the degree of improvement. (The reading rate is indicated on the left, the number reading at this speed at the beginning is shown in the center column, and the number reading at this rate at the conclusion is on the right.)

<i>Reading rate</i>	<i>Starting</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
200 words or less.....	21.....	1
201-400 words .....	62.....	52
401-600 words .....	2.....	22
601-800 words .....	1.....	6
801-1300 words .....	0.....	5
	86	86

*Turn to next page*

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There was a close correlation between the speed of reading and comprehension. For these 86 boys, comprehension usually declined if the reading rate went beyond 400-500 words per minute. There was a correlation between reading rate and scholastic success. I found that boys who made the best marks were rather consistent in reading from 300-500 words per minute. The boys who were slow readers with a low rate of comprehension in the tests also made consistently low marks; however, some people with good reading rates made poor marks in class work, indicating other factors had a bearing on their lack of success. Although this experiment was short, I felt the results were sufficiently gratifying to continue this procedure.

### **How Goldilocks Helped Solve A Reading Case**

by SAMUEL SIERLES

SAMUEL J. TILDEN HIGH SCHOOL  
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A variant of the experience chart is used by some remedial reading teachers both as a reading aid and as an effective projective technique. The pupil is asked to relate a story which may be typewritten as it is told or transcribed later. At the next session he is asked to read the story he recounted previously.

Anthony, an eight year old boy, with an I. Q. of 114 on the Stanford-Binet, was referred as a reading problem. When asked to tell his favorite story, he thought a moment and then related in an immature manner the nursery tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, a rather surprising choice for a boy of his age and mentality. Anthony had a younger sister, a blonde, incidentally, who bore a striking resemblance to Goldilocks, an intruder who had completely upset the cozy home of the baby bear.

At the next session, Anthony was presented with his literary products and he read it without a single error and with evident pride of authorship. Then he was presented with a revised edition of his script, in which the cast of characters was given real names. Anthony replaced the baby bear, his sister Judy was cast in the role of Goldilocks, and his parents, of course, were Papa and Mama Bear. This version was read by him with a high degree of accuracy and appreciation of its meaning.

In a subsequent narrative given by the child, he was able to discard his Grecian mask of anonymity and give this straightforward account: "I hate my sister. She always talks too much and she follows me every place I go and she always starts jumping on me and then I start getting mad and start hitting her and then she starts jumping on me and I just jump on her and we start pillow fights." Not a great literary work, perhaps, but a very revealing account.

Before jumping to the conclusion that this was purely a problem in sibling jealousy, Anthony's reading ability was examined. His teacher had reported that he read at a snail's pace, and when silent reading was assigned to the class, Anthony's mind seemed to wander off into space. Unless his reading ability and attention to his work improved, she would have to recommend that he be assigned to the remedial reading section. A standard oral reading test indicated that he was retarded about a year. An informal reading inventory substantiated this finding. Rate of reading was slow; nearly all the errors were repetitious, substitutions, insertions and omissions. The diagnosis was that Anthony appeared to be a rate of reading and interest case. On the adjustment side, he presented the classic Adlerian syndrome of a first-born child dethroned by a younger sibling.

It did not take too long to improve his reading ability, since he was not a word recognition case. His rate of reading improved perceptibly; his teacher noted a changed attitude in class; and he began to spend time each day at home with reading. This was achieved, in large measure, as a result of a series of round-table discussions with the dramatis personae of the revised version of Anthony's story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

#### Conclusion:

1. The dictated story, a variant of the experience chart, is a useful device in working with remedial reading cases.
2. Frequently, a child is able to reveal through the medium of an impersonal narrative the nature of the emotional burden which is impeding his progress in reading.
3. The early detection of the underlying causes of reading retardation is most desirable.

### Have You Ordered Your Copy of the First Official Proceedings?

There is still time to order your copy of "Better Readers for Our Times," the official proceedings of the first annual meeting of the International Reading Association. The book contains all the papers and discussion of seventy-five reading experts who participated in the conference. Turn to page 37 for details on how to order your copy.

Councils whose names are not listed in the News column by the Organization Chairman are urged to complete the details of their affiliation as soon as possible so that a permanent list of councils may be listed in THE READING TEACHER for December.

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